

War In Equestria

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Summary: Kim Levinson, Spartan A587, is lost in space when his Frigate the Huntress Moon undergoes a cataclysmic Shaw-Fugikawa drive failure. Lost in a world unknown to Humanity with the Smart AI Baldur, He must fight the evil forces of the planet to protect the weak, and eventually the covenant and things of that nature. M for Lang, Gore.

1. The Journey Begins

****Howdy Y'all. Yeah, that's right. I'm a fucking hillbilly, get over it! Anyway, this is the first chapter to my side project. It's here for when I have writers block on MLZR and its branches. ****

****First of all, I have to tell you that the ponies are now anthromorphed. Not furries par say, but not like in the shows. I read a couple of fics and thought of it being a good idea for something less interesting as MLZR, Prophesy, and COMING SOON Hunters to Hunted. Flame if you want, but I warn you that you shall be ridiculed with such eloquence that your feeble and shallow minds shall be completely disassembled by my proficiency in obfuscation.****

****And oh, I do not own HALO or MLP. All rights reserved.****

Kim Levinson, age 18, was lying on the cold operating table at the ONI headquarters on Reach. Doctors and surgeons milled about the room, Kim watching each one as they placed various glass instruments in trays of ethyl alcohol. A nurse walked up to him, turning his face towards her and scanning his eye with a laser. She checked the display, an image of the Caucasian boy on the table came up. "Kim A587," the dark nurse read off. "Full augmentation under anesthesia. You're lucky, kid. The two's did this awake." The nurse smiled at him reassuringly, injecting a green liquid into the IV drip leading to his arm. Kim silently watched the chemicals enter his arm, his vision fading as the last of them disappeared through the needle.

Kim sat on the edge of his cot, his body sore from the bones out after four days in recovery. He held his face in his hands, trying to block all the light from entering his eyes. The augmentations made him super sensitive to light, being able to see clearly as day in the blacked out room. He shut his lids, fighting back the headache he had as he rubbed his joints. The ceramic coating that had been bonded to his bones wasn't the most comfortable. His muscles were cramped also, the injections they gave him before he went under increased their density by three. He had been taken from his parents at night seven years ago, subjected to a rigorous schedule of training and educating, and now this. He never wanted to be a soldier, but it was all he had now. He was two days from his nineteenth birthday if he remembered right; no longer having it celebrated did a number on his memory of it. That was also to be his first deployment against the Covenant, right after the technicians attached the customized Mk. V armor he had chosen and linked it to his neural lace. There was a light knock on the metal door, sounding to Kim like he was in a bell as it was struck. He stood up and opened the door, taking the offered tray of food with thanks.

The Pelican flew through the high atmosphere of Reach, leaving it completely as it made it's way to the UNSC frigate Huntress Moon. Kim felt himself begin to lose weight, sweeping the assault and DMR rounds into their pouches as they lifted from the tray he had placed them on to load his magazines. His boots activated the magnets automatically, keeping him attached to the floor of the dropship. The twelve ton craft activated its artificial gravity, the magnets in Kim's boots deactivating. He poured the rounds back onto the tray, loading his magazines with meticulous precision. He refused to have one loaded backwards, the explosive heads a danger at that point. He loaded and reloaded, repeating his process until the alert came for the docking procedure. His fifth assignment had begun, a lone wolf strike on a rebel base in the Sigma Octanus system. They had apparently up scaled their efforts for separation after the Covenant came into the playing field.

Kim stalked through the jungle-esque growth outside of Cote De Azure, his boots long since loosing their dark blue shine to the mud. He continued out of the foliage, working his way into a sewer drain. He activated the night vision in his helmet, the tunnel lighting up. He made his way through the tunnels, the M7S machine gun he traded his magnum for raised to fire on anything that moved. Along the way he checked the manholes, his map being inaccurate due to unfinished expansion work. At each of them he noted the street signs, also taking notice of the lack of soldiers. This seemed more like intentional misinformation than a rebel bravado. At the last manhole Kim froze, above him was a covenant engineer. The floating, tentacle ridden alien paid him no mind, turning away from him after a glance. Kim scanned the area, finding the life form neutral. He climbed out after confirming the all clear, replacing the cover and taking up a hidden location. "This is Kim A587," He said into the radio. "Any UNSC forces respond. The Covenant is on Octanus 4. I repeat, the inner colonies have been breached." He ducked behind a stack of trash cans as the sounds of approaching foot steps entered the alley.

"This is blue team," The booming voice of John 117 said over the radio. Kim held his hand out to show he was friendly. "What are you doing here? This is our op, Three." Kim walked out into their flashlights, firing on a pair of grunts that had appeared behind

them. The silenced rounds of his sub machinegun tore through their flesh, fluorescent blood spraying on the walls. "Thanks," John said, issuing silent orders to hide the bodies.

The group of Spartans boarded three separate Pelicans, two armored S2's or S3's being the maximum load one could carry. The left the ground, the dropships separating as they reached orbit. Blue team returned to their corvette, Kim returning to the Huntress Moon. He watched out of the rear hatch as the Havok tactical mines detonated, leveling the city in a matter of moments. "Pilot," Kim said over the radio. "Inform the technicians that I'm taking a nap back to Reach. I won't be using the cryo-pods." He slapped the button to his right, the rear hatch closing as the neared the Huntress Moon.

Kim sat on his cot, running his gloved fingers through his close cut hair. He felt exhausted, though he had barely done anything. He had hardly even fought on the planet, being ordered out of the area by John almost immediately. He leaned back with a sigh, bouncing his helmet in the air. It was less of a physical exhaustion, more stemming from the fact that he wasn't even asked if he wanted the mission blue team was already on. It was tedium, frustration, and once again, for the last eight years, his feeling of hopelessness at the hands of ONI. He set his helmet down on the cot, reaching over to his personal stack of data cards. The one thing ONI let him have of his own was music for times like these, long trips through slip-space. He picked up the oldest album he owned, and damn it was old. He plugged the card into his helmet, placing it back over his head and blacking out the visor. The bass line played in an old rock n' roll style, followed by guitars and drums. He was a promising musical protege before he was kidnapped, having studied deep into history for all types. He paid top dollar for his collection, but he eventually owned everything that Judas Priest, AC/DC, Iron Maiden, Elvis and Johnny Cash had ever put on a record. Of course ONI replaced it all for free after his abduction and graduation. He preferred the older stuff to today's new age rock the marines listened to; it didn't have the swagger or style of the older music.

Suddenly a yellow message flashed on his visor, displaying a warning about a disturbance in slip-space. He tucked away the remainder of his data cards in a pouch on his belt, silencing the music and hearing the claxon alarms going off. 'Oh hell,' he thought, getting up and running to the armory as instructed by the Heads Up Display. He chose from a plethora of weapons, knowing where ever he was going to be dropped was too far for anything to find him in a convenient amount of time. He grabbed a duffel bag, filling it with the latest prototype weaponry.

Being an ONI favorite for efficiency and having an ethical code allowed you to have the best from Misriah, especially their test weapons. They had a reputation for tough and accurate weaponry, and who better to test them than a Spartan III. He stocked up on tens of thousands of rounds first, making sure he had enough to get him through months of skirmishes along with ten grenades. He added empty clips for the weapons he was going to grab, scooping a table full of them into the bag. He added his favorite ones. The MA5D, the experimental M395 DMR, a BR55HB SR, two M6D pistols with SAP-HE modifications, two M90CAWS and the M6 Galilean Nonlinear Rifle with a PP-16979/AM-Sh to charge it. He was just about to close the bag when he remembered his own personal toy. He ran to the back of the armory,

the scanner confirming his retinal ID before opening a long black tube. Inside was the brand new SRS99-S5 AM from Misriah Armories. The weapon had been reported of tearing the head from an Elite zealot at three miles, after easily passing through four Brutes that were dumb enough to get in the way. He loved this rifle, naming it and treating it as if it was his own holy relic. He took the weapon apart, setting it in a hard case and placing it in the bag. he closed the zipper, clasping the reinforcing straps and running to the drop bay.

The ship had dropped out of Slip-Space, the alarms signaling all personnel to evacuate the ship. Though he had practically ran the entire length of the Paris class frigate, he had not seen hide nor sign of any other personnel. The only thing that seemed to be a part of the ship was the AI and himself. He entered the back of the ship, taking a sharp left into the SOEIV bay. He placed the bag of weapons in a cargo pod, running back out for a mode of light transport. He entered the vehicle depot, jumping on the nearest light transport vehicle. It was a dual wheeled motor bike, hydrogen fuel cells operating the vehicle. Kim activated his communications, overriding all the blockades to the Smart AI that ran the ship. "Baldur, I'm taking you with me. Cole protocol and all that, the ship can be lost, but not a smart AI." The Ai confirmed, transitioning its data to the SOEIV bay. Kim revved the bike, the engine extremely quiet. It was designed with stealthy transport for a single occupant, especially on hostile planets. The back tires squealed on the slick steel of the deck as he guided it into the hall. Once out he gunned the bike, making it to the drop bay and placing it in the pod with his weapons. He pulled the data card from the holo-table, plugging Baldur into his helmet. "Ready to jump?" Kim asked sarcastically, climbing into his own pod and setting up a dual landing course.

"I hardly see any other option, 587." The AI said as the clamps maneuvered the drop pods over he launch bays. "But if it's for glory, I say jump in with both feet." Kim smiled at the reference. If there were no ONI operatives nearby, he may be free of them for the rest of his life. The pod shook as the clamps released, being replaced by yet another pair. He felt the gravity give way, the ship loosing its self of the spin it maintained to keep artificial gravity as the Shaw Fugikawa drive began to go critical. The pod was let go, a source of gravity pulling it away from the ship. The atmosphere was quickly baking away the ceramic outer coating, Kim looking up and finding the frigate being drawn into an unstable slip space rupture. "There she goes," Baldur said, monitoring the video feed from Kim's helmet. "There goes my home for the last three years." Kim could feel the AI's concept of sadness as the remains of the Huntress Moon disappeared into the rupture.

Kim monitored the information from his onboard sensors carefully, finding the planet to have standard earth gravity and an Oxy-Nitro mixture in its atmosphere. "At least I wont suffocate, eh?" he said to the AI, getting an agreeing hum. The pod loosed its braking chute, the vessel slowing to a more reasonable speed before the brakes were released. Kim had the AI load any cartography it had collected during the jump to his neural lace, wanting to know before the fifty meter mark where he was landing. It was going to be in a swamp, that much was for certain. "Ughâ€¦" Kim mused aloud to himself. "More muck." The pod neared the fifty meter mark, the thrusters readying before firing and partially lifting the pod into the air further. The encasement fell again, landing hard in a shallow body of water. The craft continued to sink in the mud, Kim activating the explosive

bolts quickly. The door hissed first, water seeping into the crash seat as he reached over his shoulders for the dual M7 sub machine guns. He held them upwards, turning them to the fore as the door exploded out.

Kim waited for any movement in the smoke and fog, the sound of the door thudding in some mud the only thing his audio sensors detected. There was another explosion, the cargo pod " twice the size of his one seater " landing on solid ground to the north east. Kim waited another five minutes, waiting for anything to challenge his presence. He noticed his tomb was sinking fast now, deciding this the perfect time to make his move. He stood up, surging out into the open near the cargo pod and holding the weapons out to the sides. His visor monitors split, displaying both directions. Despite his caution, nothing moved save an amphibian that ducked into the water. "I think the area is safe," Baldur pointed out, pausing afterwards to process his human interface data. "For now, that is." Kim nodded, turning around and opening the side panel. Inside was a remote trigger, which he took. He stood behind the pod, activating the trigger and being greeted with a thunderous report.

As the door tumbled through the air, Kim pulled the motor bike from the pod, setting it up on the kickstand. He retrieved the bag of weapons, taking out the Silencers and four full clips of caseless ammunition for his current arms. 'Gotta get to where I can think safely,' he thought, securing the bag once more and throwing it over his shoulders. He slipped his arms through the handle straps, securing it with the shoulder strap around his chest. He sat down on the bike, attaching the silencers to his weapons and starting the engine. He tested the soil on the tread, finding it reasonably solid. He stood up, tossing grenades into the pods before zooming off along what he thought was a path. Behind him the pods exploded, all useable Intel they had was now destroyed or burning.

Kim had ridden into the dark of the night, stopping atop a rather tall mountain to make camp. He turned off the bike, taking off his bag and helmet before sitting on a convenient rock. "Baldur," Kim said, planting a thin branch into the ground. "Map out the surrounding area as well as you can from here. I'll check in with you in the morning." He set his helmet on the stick, getting two chirping sounds in response. Kim pulled out a defoliant projector he scavenged from the pods, making a small fire with a dead bush and some branches and lighting it with napalm. He noticed that the stars were vastly different from any planet he had been on before, seeming out of order save Orion. 'At least I'm still in the right sector of the galaxy,' he thought, loading his magazines with their coordinating munitions. He finished his task, loading each weapon with a clip before replacing it in the bag. he kept the M7's on his thighs, placing the MA5B on the ground beside him for safeties sake. He was about to lay down for the remainder of the night when his helmet chimed. He donned it, thinking his question.

"There seems to be artificial structures on this planet," Baldur said, showing him with a waypoint. The lights in the horizon were slight, shrinking in number as the residents turned in for the night. "I am unable to confirm species or faction at the moment, but I suggest detouring around them during travel. Confrontation is an unknown possibility, but it may be inevitable. Technological achievement is also unknown, but the structure integrity and layout suggests they have at the least a rudimentary understanding of combat

and possibly firearms." Kim nodded to himself, deciding to observe them from afar in the morning when there was no need for an EM and thermal scope. "Good Night, 587," Baldur said, beginning to monitor the suits sensors.

"Call me Kim," he said, getting an acknowledgement from the AI. He plugged in a data card to his helmet and set the soft classical symphony to play as he drifted off to sleep. He found his sleep different after the augmentations, his dreams now twisted and distorted forms of reality. His eyes closed, he watched the stars turn and dance among the sky. They swirled and turned, changing position with other constellations to the sound of the symphony. The celestial dance continued until the stars faded behind the rising sun, the light bringing him out of his rest. Kim opened his eyes, remaining still on the warm earth as Baldur mapped and monitored the area. His helmet sounded an alarm, bringing him to a state of awareness. "I'm up," He said, rolling over and pushing himself into a stand. "What's going on Baldur?" He asked, taking the SRS99-S5 from the bag and assembling it. Baldur brought up a map of the area, a blinking yellow dot moving along what he assumed was a road as he slid the barrel into its locks and screwed it into place.

"An aboriginal creature approaches the hill," Baldur informed him as he secured a magazine into the chamber. "It seems to be laden with a pack of some sorts, the deflection of the radar being oblong and large." Kim pushed the charging hammer forward, loading a round into the chamber by hand so he would have an extra round if he needed it. "The speed of the approach is close to the standard human stride, I am assuming female from the length. But it could be a male of short stature and lightâ€¦"

"Yeah, yeah," Kim interrupted, attaching the scope to the rail on top of the body and attaching a wire to his helmet. "A short skinny bastard, I got it." He walked over to the ledge, laying on his stomach and spreading his legs to make a seventy degree angle for stability. He opened the bipod, laying the rifle on a rock and supporting his weight on his left palm as he sighted in the target. He used his neural lace to control the zoom of the smart linked scope, focusing and activating the thermal imaging to acquire the target. He found the bipedal life form beyond a stand of trees, about to come into visual soon. He followed the target with his rifle, his finger resting on the safety should it turn out to be a Covenant member. As the thermal read came out from behind the foliage he returned to standard, the creature fuzzy and out of focus. The scope could be heard whining as the mechanics automatically adjusted, bringing the biped into full focus. It looked to be human, save for its violet skin, tail and horn. "Any records on what I'm seeing?" Kim asked Baldur, taking mental notes. The biped stood about five foot seven, from visual ascertaining it looked to be around a hundred twenty or a hundred ten Imperial pounds and wore black pants and a sleeveless style shirt of like color. It had navy blue hair with a pink stripe through both the hair and tail. It was female, the curvature of the hips and mammary organs confirmed that.

"No known interaction or recording of this species last I was in the archives, Lieutenant," Baldur informed. Kim continued to monitor the being, another coming into view behind it. this one was also humanoid, but instead of horns it had wings. The biped was an earth tone yellow with pink hair, also female. She wore a white dress and tightly fitting leggings beneath the skirt. Unlike the first one,

which had an expression that bespoke determination, this one seemed slightly unsure and afraid of the surrounding forest. She would startle when an animal moved in the foliage, confirming the apprehension theory. "The two seem to be on course with what I think is an abode in the forest," Baldur informed. "There is another life form there as well. The three could possibly be friends." Kim continued to watch, finding Baldur in the green on their destination. The violet one raised a hand and knocked, the door opening to let them in. "I have an approach plotted," Baldur said, bringing up a map as Kim unplugged from the scope. He looked over the path, attaching the rifle to his back with the built in clamps on the armor. He picked up the BR55HB from the bag, attaching a silencer to it for safety's sake. Kim picked up the bag and slipped his arms through the straps before climbing on the motor bike.

"Let's go say hi," Kim muttered, starting toward the ledge Baldur had indicated. The bike whined quietly as it leapt from the ground, landing ten feet below and continuing its forward course. Kim guided the vehicle through the trees and brush, staying as invisible as he could in the slightly damp earth. He wished he had slicks instead of grip tread, berating himself for not considering that when he had the resources. Baldur advised that he stash the bike away and walk the remainder of the trip. Kim agreed, hiding the vehicle in some large hedges and drawing his BR55. He pushed the charging handle forward, taking the safety off before setting off to the northeast. He found himself treading and forcing his way through large patches of thorn vines, halting at the edge of a large patch of bright blue plants. "Hello?" He said aloud, drawing his combat knife and manipulating one of the plants. It had three leaves on each appendage, the edges smooth. If the planet was anything like Reach or Earth, bright colors meant danger. "Looks like Poison Ivy," Kim commented, having Baldur catalogue the plant for later when he could analyze it fully. "Better safe than sorry," Kim mused, walking around the patch carefully. Even in his armor, he didn't want to risk the plant having any effect on him. At the edge of the patch of strange plants was a tree, converted into a house. It was complete with glass paned windows, a door and a chimney. There was talk inside, Kim making his way under one of the windows and placing a bug on the frame. He stood beside the port, peeking inside to see what was going on. There was another being, this one also female but with black and white stripes on her skin and a Mohawk of like color. She was talking to the violet one from earlier, the yellow one sitting behind her companion timidly.

"Thank you for the herbs again Zecora," The violet one said, shaking the new contact's hand. "I don't think I would have been able to finish my research without them. The black and white humanoid bowed her head slightly, nodding to the violet one.

"It is no trouble Twilight," Zecora said, the conversation amplified over Kim's helmet through the bug. Her accent was akin to South Africa on Earth, also reminding him of the mining colony on Harvest. "What ever I have is yours if it can alleviate your plights." Kim ducked out of sight as the life forms turned his direction, hiding behind a stump as the door opened. "Please, do not hesitate to stop by. I tend to get lonely with no company but the sky." Kim watched as the Violet being, Twilight, shook Zecora's hand again. Zecora turned to the yellow one, shaking her hand as well. "That goes the same for you. If your animals need remedies, what ever I can do. Farewell Twilight, Fluttershy." She called, waving to the two as they walked away. Kim picked up the bug, about to make his way back to the bike

when he heard foot steps behind him. "Stranger, Do not move. My trust in you, you've yet to prove." Kim turned around, holding his rifle away. He wasn't in a predicament that required action, preferring to use this moment to gather Intel. "From where do you hail, friend. Your kind I have not seen, especially around this bend." Kim catalogued the beings possible weapons, having naught but the brightly colored robes she wore.

"I'm not from here," Kim said honestly, keeping her in the dark. "I'm kind of lost." The being nodded, understanding somewhat. "Could you tell me where I am?" He asked. "The planet, I mean." Zecora cocked an eyebrow, confused that he didn't know what planet he was on.

"Equestria, good sir," She informed. "Somewhat strange, not knowing where you are." Kim shrugged, looking back slightly.

"I kind of got dropped off," He said, half joking. "I didn't have time to find out where I am."

"First contact going nicely," Baldur commented. "I would suggest finding how these beings deal with others they aren't familiar with. She may be an exception to the general rule."

"I need to know," Kim began. "I'm am not from here and I don't know how the population would take to me showing up unannounced in the town to the east." He lowered his rifle to one hand, Zecora following the weapon with her eyes the entire time. 'So they know what guns are,' Kim noted in his mind.

"The ponies hereâ€¦" Zecora began, Kim cutting her off with a scoff.

"Ponies?" He asked, astounded. "You have got to be joking. You're a pony? I find that hard to believe." Kim was about to write her off as demented, taking the rhyming into account as well when the two from before came into view.

"And why would that be so strange?" The one known as Twilight said, walking into view. Kim felt his arm twitch forward out of instinct, fighting the limb for control as not to startle them. Twilight had several objects that could be weaponized at any moment, so he had to play it safe. "I asked you a question. And while you're at it, what's your name?" Kim shook his head, turning to his left and taking off the bag of guns. The metal rattled as it was set on the ground, the groups attention switching from it to the rifle as he laid it on top. Kim reached up and grasped his helmet, sliding his thumbs into the grooves under the lip of the jaw line. He lifted it up, the vacuum hissing as it released. He took off the helmet, holding it in the crook of his elbow as the 'ponies' observed his features. He was pale skinned, his hair the opposite in a dark red flat top. His eyes were smaller than theirs by a fraction of measurement.

"I'm Kim Levinson, Spartan Three project number Alpha 587," He said, continuing to list off his UNSC tag number. "You cannot be serious about the pony stuff." He said, still finding it ridiculous. "Ponies are small horses. You know, four legged plant munching things. You are bipedal, and from the looks of your teeth I can wager money on you eating meat." Zecora, looked him over further, walking around him. Kim had, unlike the ponies, rounded and short ears. His nose was

half as broad and his form more muscular and designed for climbing or running. Kim looked at Zecora as she passed around him in turn, noting that she did have a rather horse like appearance. Her ears were about twice as long as a humans, her nose broader and slightly flatter also. Her head showed no hint that the Mohawk was a style, rather that that was it's way of growing. On the third pass around Zecora touched Kim's armor, finding it to be armor indeed. Kim noticed that her nails were more opaque and thicker than a humans, seeming to be made more like a small piece of a hoof. "Ok, maybe I was a little quick to judge." He relented, holding up a hand. "I have to say, I've seen more absurd things than talking, bipedal ponies in my lifetime." Twilight crossed her arms, Zecora whispering something to her as she walked past her.

"Why are you dressed up like a warship?" She asked him, nodding to his armor. "If you truly are not a pony like us, and this is your first contact with our kindâ€¦ Why do you look like your ready to fight a war on the world by yourself." She motioned with a hand to the bag. "And I assume that bag is also laden down with weapons and explosives." Kim shook his head and tapped a finger on an M7, wondering if they might become hostile.

"Safety precautions," He said, preparing himself for the expected sneers to come. "When you're a genetically enhanced super soldier from another planet, now a castaway on an uncharted sector of the galaxy, it helps to have a way to get your point across to anything that wants to harm you." Kim's helmet chirped twice, Baldur having something to say. "One moment please," He said, donning the helmet. He turned around, leaning on a small tree and staring up at an angle. The ponies gave him strange looks as he nodded and motioned like he was talking to something, even hearing a one sided conversation. "Yeahâ€¦ I knowâ€¦ Well if you were me, wouldn't you have the same reaction?â€¦ No I don't need to be reminded of Cole Protocolâ€¦ Yes, I'm sure. Yesâ€¦ Ye- Then you talk to them! You seem to know everything already." Kim had startled them with his sudden outburst. He opened a large pocket on his armor, reaching in and pulling out a large, square object. "Press the red button," He instructed the ponies, plugging Baldur's Data Card into the square before tossing it in the middle of the group. He walked over and crouched next to his bag, taking off the SRS99-S5 and disassembling it. He placed it in it's hard case, ignoring what was going on save for who had the display tablet at what time.

Twilight picked up the black square, setting it on the stump next to Zecora's house and following Kim's instructions. A section of the item raised up, projecting an image in the air of another of Kim's kind. "Greetings," the projection said. "I am Baldur." Twilight picked up the flat box, marveling at the level of technology. If anypony had wanted to make one of these, it would have taken up half of the royal castle. "Madam, if you would, please set my projector down." Twilight was startled by the transparent beings directed demand, setting it back quickly. "Thank you. Now if everyone is through being childish," Baldur said, looking back over his shoulder. Kim was counting up his magazines, pouting and fuming at the same time. "I would like to offer you all a treaty. But first," Baldur couldn't resist, and Kim could see where it was going. His father had been a big fan of old earth movies, especially Science Fiction films. He used to marvel at how accurate the 21st century was to their tech. "Take me to your leader." Baldur demanded with a hint of humor, getting a laugh from Kim.

****Alright you sorry maggots! Get on the review board and post your puny opinions!****

****Pwetty pwease? :3****

2. New Friends And Old Enemies

****Alright, after three astounding reviews I have to say I never thought I would continue this. But my Writer's block persisted on Prophecy, so here it is. Chapter two of War In Equestria is now complete, read 'em and weep!****

****I'm too poor to own MLP or HALO. All Rights Reserved.****

Kim walked behind Twilight through the streets of Canterlot, observing the architecture. Baldur had made his point known that there was an inter galactic war raging in the Orion arm of the galaxy, wishing to strike a pact with the Equestrian's for the UNSC in the instance the Covenant decided to attack the planet. Twilight had teleported them to the city, Kim recovering from the nausea quickly upon arrival. They had taken the main road, ponies watching the Six foot five inches tall being clad head to toe in dark blue armor as he followed the unicorn through the streets. Mother's shielded their children as he passed, aware that the weapons he had were powerful. Several times a guard or two had approached them, Twilight always turning them away under urgent pretenses. Two of them had stayed with them, each carrying swords and flintlock pistols. Kim had dropped back slightly, talking to the one with the most ranking signs. "So," He began, trying to be friendly. "What's your name?"

"Sapphire Shield," She said, not looking from her path and resting a steel clad limb on her pistol. Kim had a side-viewing camera take several stills of her, observing them as he navigated the crowded streets. She was tall for a female, around five feet and eleven inches. Her weight seemed to be slim, but her musculature differed. He guessed the pony's weight at around two hundred lean pounds, not wanting to piss her off.

"I take it you're rather high ranking here," Kim said, trying to strike up conversation. "The way you command respect from the other guards says you either have a high position, or a deadly reputation." Sapphire scoffed, smirking slightly. Kim glanced at her, cataloguing her blue skin and hair also.

"Both," She said. "I am guard captain for the Celestial Guard." She raised her right arm, tapping her right leg afterward. "These are a full metal prosthetics. I lost my limbs during the third Griffin war, successfully ending a five day siege on their capitol in the process by myself." Kim nodded, sure that she had to have molten steel in her veins to end a siege single handedly; more reasons not to piss her off. "What about you?" She asked, catching him off guard. "You seem to be a soldier of merit, considering the amount of scarring on your armor." Kim looked at his plating, noticing deep scores and scars he had missed.

"I'm a lieutenant," He said. "And I usually work alone, so any combat I encounter ensures a hit taken no matter how careful I am." Sapphire

spared him a glance, appreciating the way he had the suit configured. "I think this one," He said, pointing to a long but shallow tear in the chest piece. "Was from a grazing blow from an energy sword. Hand to hand combat with an Elite swordsman is something many beings never survive." Sapphire chuckled to herself, already liking him.

They continued in silence, walking down the stone paved street. Canterlot looked like something from a fantasy novel to Kim, the buildings and walls being made of an opalescent stone of massive scales. Everything stood at two stories or above five, the blocks un-mortared and held together by sheer weight. It was built in the ancient Greco-Roman style; the only modern looking things were the black cables that ran from pillars to the buildings. They turned a corner at the center square, the castle falling into view. It was of equally massive scale, being well over seven hundred feet tall at the spires. It spanned nearly an equal distance as the city; the walls separated from the city walls by a hundred feet of barren land and possible explosives. The gates opened out as they approached, two horned guards in gold armor holding their arms towards the massive doors. Their horns glowed with a color like their skin, what had been explained to Kim as Magic in play.

They walked into the gardens behind the doors, trees of massive size and floral displays that hurt Kim's eyes to observe all around. There were servants tending to the foliage, stopping and nodding to Twilight as she passed. She would wave back, shooting them smiles like old friends. They continued through the garden, Kim thinking it was more of a strategic barrier than a display. The trees were placed tactically, each branch knobbed in enough places to hide a camouflaged soldier if they needed to. They exited the foliage, the sunlight having a ruddy glow at high noon. Before them were the doors to the inner castle, before the open doors a tall woman with wings and a horn. It was three times as long as Twilight's, seeming to glow with a white light. The ponies bowed, kneeling in the presence of the being. Kim remained at attention as he had been, showing respect but not fealty.

The woman descended the stairs, he stride lithe and smooth yet commanding an air of power. She slowed her walk, circling Kim like a prized trophy. Kim observed her also. She had pastel white skin, her wings of the same color along with her horn. She was a few inches shy of Kim; even if she hadn't been wearing three inch heals that brought them to eye level. She wore light blue leggings that hugged her form, a gold armored corset on her torso. Her hair was a rainbow of pastel colors, waving softly in a non-existent breeze. She wore a dappled green cloak like a hunter of old and a golden crown with a large star sapphire of red inlaid in the center. "Why do you not kneel?" She asked, her voice calm but firm, like a mother fed up with her child's antics. "You are in the presence of royalty, and yet you stand as if a statue. Unmoving and stiff as marble." Kim slowly turned his visor towards her, the black polarized glass reflecting her image.

"I bow to nothing," He said in a not unkind tone. "I am possibly the most powerful soldier in the known galaxy, so why should I bow to you?" He wanted a genuine answer, for her to earn his respect. The horned monarch circled him once more, Kim following her with his visor as she passed his left shoulder. She tapped his chest plate as Zecora had, pulling her gloved finger away and observing the particles that had collected on it.

"I know of where you come, human," She said, surprising Kim slightly of her knowledge of his race. "You were once the dominant race in the galaxy, ruling alongside the Forerunners. But this is no more." She removed her white gloves, her arms bare now as a servant produced another pair for her. She slipped the arm length gloves on, returning her left hand to the Rapier at her hip. "You say you have an offer for my ponies, and I shall hear it. Captain," The monarch turned and walked back inside, Sapphire pushing Kim gently forward.

The Foyer of the castle was ornately done, tapestries depicting a stylized sun and moon hung on the walls at every recess, gold and silver hammered into the blocks of stone for mortar. Kim followed the Monarch down the hall, Sapphire keeping a firm grip on his arm as she lead him down the way. The servants and guards along the way knelt as she passed, returning to their duties as she moved on by. They neared a set of iron bound oak doors, two guards kicking the wood hard before kneeling to the sides. The doors opened out, two more horned guards using their magic to open them. The monarch led them into the throne room, another horned and winged being in a seat of silver. Beside her was a throne of gold, empty save the cushion of red velvet. The white skinned monarch took her place, sitting in her gilded throne and motioning to Sapphire. The Captain pulled with her mechanical arm on Kim's, attempting to force him to kneel. He refused to budge, even when the soldier's arm whined from the strain. She gave in, making a gesture of futility. The white monarch motioned with her hand, dismissing the soldier from the room. She bowed, turning on her heel and exiting. The monarch touched herself on the bosom. "I am Princess Celestia," She introduced, waving a hand to the black being next to her. "This is my sister Luna. May we learn your name, Reclaimer?" Kim adjusted his hold on the BR55, attaching it to the back of his armor.

"I am Kim Levinson," He said, nodding slightly. "Spartan three graduate Alpha 578." He opened the pocket in his chest plate, withdrawing a black box like before. "I do not have the clearance to offer this pact, but the AI under my care does." He removed the data card from his helmet, placing it into the black box and pressing the red button. He tossed the projector into the middle ground, a full sized image of Baldur taking form. He was six feet tall, dressed in a tunic and pants with a beard to his waist.

"Greeting's princesses," He said, bowing slightly. "I am Baldur, the Artificial Intelligence under this Spartans care." He walked around his limited range. "I am here to inform you that there is a galactic war going on outside your system between the humans and an enemy more powerful than you can imagine. They have the ability to turn planets to barren wastes, decimate any and all defenses in a matter of moments and a religious zeal that out rates any know other. They have cast a genocidal campaign against all things related to humanity in even appearance. Thus I believe your planet to be at risk of an attack should they discover it." He stopped pacing and spread his arms. "I offer you a pact of cooperation between the UNSC and yourselves. Should the covenant appear, you have only to send us word and we shall arrive with a force large enough to turn them away. All you need is this device." Kim produced a cube from his pockets, holding it out. "You activate this device, and within the month we shall be on your doorstep to aid you. The choice is yours, princesses. I leave you decision with my friend here." and with that he disappeared. Celestia motioned to a servant to return the projector to Kim, the box being back in his possession immediately.

He removed the data card, replacing it in his helmet.

Kim stood in the center of the throne room as the sisters discussed the offer, weighing the pros and cons of having to run to a single military force to escape another. They continued to talk as Kim returned the projector to his pouch, clasping the pocket shut with a click. The sound was nearly deafening in the room, the sister's falling silent as it echoed through the chamber. Celestia sat up in her throne, as did Luna. "We have discussed this offer," She said. "And if what you say is true of his enemy, then we have no other choice than to accept." She motioned for him to leave, getting up and walking him out of the castle with her sister. The guards closed the doors, taking up position behind heir princesses. "I must inform you, Spartan," Celestia said as they walked through the foyer. "Your circumstances are rather crude. You are abandoned on our planet, demand to talk to us, and then force this kingdom into a corner we cannot escape from. This will not sit well with the Council of Three, so I warn you that they may find you to be a danger." Kim scoffed in amusement.

"I take it you are warning me to watch my back for my own good," He said, getting a nod from the white monarch. He shook his head, tapping himself on the chest. "I doubt you have the means to harm me. Especially while I am in full gear." They stopped at the door, Captain Sapphire taking up position beside Kim. Luna stepped forward and took Kim's hand, pressing something into it before releasing him. It was a choker style necklace, a design of the Diarchy emblazoned on the leather.

"This will protect you from any magical attack," The dark princess said. "While we do not trust you completely, you have shown a compassion not expected. This has proven you to be of valor and honor, a being of trustworthiness. Please, remove your helmet." Kim did as he was asked, the guards being sent back as the vacuum seal hissed. Luna's eyes widened at the sight of his features, being surprisingly like that of an earth pony. She took the choker, placing it around the skin of his neck and clasping it behind his neck. She adjusted the length to fit snug, reducing the chance of chafing and discomfort. "You are now an honorary member of our race," She told him, bringing his head down and kissing him on the brow. "Do not besmirch this gift, Spartan." She said, releasing him. Celestia motioned to Sapphire, sending her with him through the garden.

"So why are you following me?" Kim asked as they exited the courtyard, finding Twilight sitting on a bench reading. She shrugged as Twilight approached, taking off her helmet. Her hair fell to the small of her back, being deep blue and having a slight radiance.

"I have orders to study your tactics and ethic code," She said, placing the Greek style helm in the crook of her elbow and hip. "You should get used to me following you, because I shall be watching you until I deign fit to return to the castle and brief the princesses on you further." She draped a traveling cloak over her shoulders, adjusting it so the dual swords on her back poked out of the hooded garment. "Also, I wouldn't mind seeing my brother again. He lives in Ponyville, playing music for a living." She nodded to Twilight, getting one in return. The violet unicorn touched both of them on the shoulder, concentrating on the teleportation spell.

Kim was assaulted by a white light, feeling like he was being thrown

through an industrial washing machine. The nausea set in fully just before they arrived at their destination, Kim swaying uneasily as Twilight released his shoulder. Sapphire grasped his arm, supporting him as his vertigo receded. "I don't want to do that for the next week," Kim said, looking around the area. They were back at Zecora's house, the Zebra standing beside the door now with the bag of weapons beside her. Kim nodded to her, slipping the bag over his shoulders and shouldering his rifle. "Thanks for watching these," Kim said, getting a slight bow in return. He turned around, looking back over his shoulder toward the wood before retuning his view to the fore. "I left some gear back in the woods," he explained, turning around and walking towards where he had left the bike. "I'll catch up at town," He shot back disappearing into the trees. Sapphire swore and drew a curved shamshir from her back, hacking her way through the underbrush behind him.

"You aren't getting away that easily," She yelled over the sounds of snapping wood and slicing vegetation. "Hey, Slow down some!" Twilight watched the two disappear into the forest, left alone for the trek back to Ponyville.

"Well," She said, waving goodbye to Zecora. "It's only a mile at least." She started off along the mildly worn path, Fluttershy running after her from inside the hut.

Kim pushed through the underbrush, his progress unhindered now that stealth was not an issue. He plowed through most everything, lazily stepping over a fallen tree trunk as Sapphire leapt from tree to tree. She would land on a branch, leaping off to the next tree and scoring the trunk deep with the claws on her right arm. The mechanical sounds were becoming irritating to Kim, but he couldn't complain too much; at least she was done trying to chop down the whole forest. Kim checked his Heads Up Display, noticing he was almost to the site where he hid the bike. He walked up to the stand of bushes, moving the shrubbery aside to reveal the large one seat dirk bike. "You are a highly advanced alien from space," Sapphire said, landing next to him and tossing her hair out of her face. "And you bring a bag of guns and a large bicycle?" Kim shrugged, getting a ping from Baldur on his map.

"I found a piece of the Huntress!" The AI exclaimed rather happily. "Even if it's a slab of hull plating, we have to check it." Kim nodded to himself, sliding the BR55 between the duffle bag and his armor. He grabbed Sapphire by the shoulders, setting her down on the bike seat and climbing on behind her. He started the bike, the machine lurching forward.

"I suggest you hold on to me," Kim said, revving the bike, letting it jump again. Sapphire squeaked slightly, reaching behind herself and clutching onto Kim's legs. He stood up on the pegs, gunning the bike and fighting the forks around towards the fragment of the Huntress Moon. They zoomed through the forest, Sapphire exclaiming in fright as Kim hugged close to the trees at close to sixty MPH. He jumped the bike over a ditch, causing her to scream and clutch onto him tighter. "I told you to hold on tight." He said loudly, projecting his voice past the rushing wind. Sapphire shook her head rapidly, thinking him insane in the extreme.

"You didn't tell me this thing went so fast!" She screamed, clenching her hands into his armor as the bike skidded to the sides in a patch

of loose gravel. Kim laughed, not having had this much fun since he was a child. "What the buck are you laughing at?" She panicked, ducking a branch the snapped over Kim's chest plate. "This is not funny!" Kim saw a large black and gray object in a stand of trees, the hunk of the Huntress Moon holding part of the ship's name. He clenched down on the brakes, the bike easing up onto its front wheels as it slowed to a stop. Sapphire jumped off the bike, holding onto the ground with both hands; she had never been so happy to see dirt in her life. Kim dropped the kickstand, getting off the bike and laying his bag on the ground. It was the rear section, or at least part of it. The enormous lettering read "_UNSC 689 Huntress_" across the scarred and stressed Titanium-A Battle plate. Sapphire looked up at the hunk of metal, astounded by the sheer size of it all. "What is that?" She asked quietly, afraid and intrigued at the same time.

Kim walked up to the aft section, Baldur listing off what might be inside as he ran a gloved hand over the surfaces. "This is my ship," He said, his voice unchanged despite the astonishing fact that any of it had survived the Shaw-Fugikawa failure. "It was destroyed above the planet." Kim walked along the hundred yard section, finding a tear in the hull and framework. "But I was apparently wrong in that thought," He said, slipping into the structure. Sapphire jumped to her feet, following him into the structure. She hit her head on something immensely hard, cutting her scalp and getting knocked back on her flank. A white light flashed into her face, the illuminated beam turning around and revealing Kim handing her a fire arm. "It isn't loaded, so you don't have to worry about shooting anything. Think of it as a rather bulky flashlight." Sapphire took the weapon in her hand, using Kim's offered hand to stand again. "Ouch," he said upon seeing her head wound.

The cut went under and back into her scalp, a quarter inch of blue skin floating freely on her forehead and cranium. Kim touched the wound, Sapphire slapping his hand away as the pain became obvious. "Don't touch the damn thing," She hissed through clenched teeth. "Let's just get done here and make our way to Ponyville so I can get some stitches." Kim nodded and turned back into the darkness, lifting his M7 and looking over the area with the flashlight. It was part of the vehicle depot and ammunition replacement bay, the majority of the machines destroyed save a few. He walked into the bay, Sapphire trailing behind to marvel at the size of the structure. The ceiling was higher up than that of the castle, lights hanging from the ceiling by black bundles of cords and wiring. "How are these things made?" She asked, trailing off as she saw the destroyed husk of a Scorpion tank. The barrel caught her attention, noting it wasn't as large as a cannon, but that it still had immeasurable power to compare to one. Kim looked back at her, watching the blue Equestrian look the tank over with a sense of awe and fear. He turned back to his current target, an ammunition replication machine.

"The same way everything my race makes," He said, checking the brass and cordite reserves. They were full to capacity, the marines having missed any action ship to ship since their last refit and re-arm. "On a planet in the home system, there is a massive factory. It almost covers the whole of that world, building and assembling nearly everything we need to fight the Covenant. They produce ships of massive proportions and almost every weapon and vehicle we use." He returned to his search, inventorying the remaining vehicles. Baldur listed each one on his HUD, noting at the fore what repairs were needed and if another vehicle had too many disabilities. There were

enough here to rebuild each model of Warthog, save the rocket model, two working Mongooses, one tank that would be a long shot, and a hornet that he would have to fabricate parts to fix. It was a daunting task, but if he could find the Titanium and Tungsten to form the parts it wasn't impossible. He also had to manufacture Hydrogen for fuel, find the chemicals to replenish the artificial lubricant they used, but above all he had to find the back up power generator to power the section of the ship. "How fast can you have a contingent of guards here?" Kim asked her, snapping his fingers to get her attention. Sapphire gave him a confused look. "This cannot fall into the wrong hands, and there is too much that is salvageable to just destroy it." Sapphire shrugged, walking up to a warthog with a cargo cage in the back platform.

"If I had my radio," She began, sitting in the passenger seat and looking over the dash displays. "I could have them here in under thirty minutes. The Unicorn guard would arrive first, followed by the Pegasus guards and last the main force." Kim nodded, looking over the Warthog she was in. "Do you have a radio I could use?" She asked, getting a so-so motion from Kim.

"I have one, but not that you could use." She nodded, about to get out of the vehicle. She stopped when Kim sat down and started the vehicle. He pressed a series of buttons on the dash, entering a code before the frame shook. The engine purred quietly, Kim patted the dashboard appreciatively when it refused to show signs of damage. "What's the channel?" He asked, tapping a touch screen on the dash before picking up a small receiver.

"101-52-001," She said, Kim adding the numbers and getting a steady amount of chatter out of the speakers. He handed her the microphone, letting her call it in. "This is Sapphire Shield, Guard Captain. Does anyone hear me?" They waited for a response, the line falling silent save for a couple of reports of an arrest.

"This is Stormbrand," a male said, his voice hazy on the frequency. Kim adjusted a knob as he continued, bringing it into full clarity. "I thought you were on a special assignment captain." Sapphire pressed the button, waiting the standard second.

"I am," She clarified as Kim got out and continued his search for the generator. "I need a contingent of guardsponies to this location," She pulled out a map and found where they were, marking the location with a finger. "North 45 degrees by fifty two, west sixteen degrees by eight. Copy, over." The pony reiterated her coordinates, issuing several orders away from the mic that were barely audible.

"Full copy, Captain," Stormbrand said, a loud pop sounding from outside the section followed by exclamations of awe and surprise. "The Pegasus guards should be there soon. I've already sent the Unicorns, they should be making their way to you now. Over and out." The radio went silent, the usual chatter returning a moment later. Sapphire stood up in the seat, leaning back on the roll bar as fifteen Unicorns in mixed gold and black armor entered the artificial cavern. They were awestruck, not a single one had their eyes anywhere but on the machines and super structure.

"Hey!" Sapphire yelled at them, shining her flashlight on them as four jumped in fright. She laughed at them, waving them over after her fun. "I have orders for you," She informed, the soldiers snapping

to attention. "You are to set up a barrier around this place. Nothing gets in or out without my or Kim's confirmed permission, understood?" The fifteen ponies clasped their fists to their chest plates, saluting in their fashion. Kim came out from behind a corner, his M7 raised behind himself. There was a sound resonating through the area now, a sort of scratching and clicking sound. The ponies looked around, each drawing a sword or charging a spell into their palm. The sound increased in number, followed by several growls. "Kim, what is that?" Sapphire asked, getting a raised hand as he scanned the area with the light. He held the sub machine gun at his waist, knowing all too well that the Shaw-Fugikawa failure was no accident now.

"The reason I'm stranded here," He said, laying his light on an air vent above them. Four Skirmishers dropped ten feet to the floor, raising Needle Rifles at him. Kim began to stalk sideways to his right, turning off his helmet mic and activating the radio. "Sapphire," his voice crackled quietly on the dashboard com line. "There is a rather large gun on the vehicle next to you. Get on it and press the red button on the right handle, followed by the black one on the left." She disappeared into the vehicles as the Skirmisher's began to fan out, trying to encircle their target. Kim continued to stalk around them, keeping all of them in his line of sight as Sapphire mounted the LAAG on a Warthog. Kim had them turned with their backs to her, firing into one of them as she rotated the barrels on the machinegun. The bullets began flying now, Kim ducking away from the fire as the Covenant forces were decimated by the gun. Indigo blood sprayed and spurted like a dying fountain, coating the walls and floor in color as the bodies of the aliens were cut to ribbons. When she stopped firing the enemies were little more than blue heaps of armor and flesh, the barrels steaming and smoking from the sustained fire.

A unicorn guard ran off, the sounds of vomit echoing from behind the Scorpion tank as he took in what had just happened. The other Unicorns stared on at the decimated corpses, switching their view to Kim and his weapons. They had never seen any firearm that effective before. All of Equestria's guns were either shot based blunder-busts, or flintlock rifles that you had to aim low to his high. The Weapons he held were fully automatic, especially the mounted turret Sapphire had fired. The tracer rounds were still flying in their minds, the glowing orange lights chewing through the aliens like paper. "Nightmare Moon, Sapphire!" A gray unicorn in black Lunar Guard armor said, shell-shocked by the event. "You just!" "Damn!" Kim picked up the Skirmisher he had shot, slamming the corpse onto the hood of the Warthog Sapphire was in.

Kim fired into the creature's body cavity, turning it over and slamming his elbow into the things back. Indigo blood coated the nose of the vehicle, turning the green metal blue and prompting the unicorn that returned to run back and vomit again. Kim let the body fall, kicking it aside as he approached the turret. He held out a hand, helping Sapphire down in the cramped quarters. "If those were responsible for this ship being destroyed," He said, turning to face the unicorn guards. "Then you might want to remember what you saw here. If any more of those show up, or any tall ones with jaws that open sideways, you get on one of these guns and do the same thing she did. Right red, left black." The guards saluted again, Kim raising his hand to his helmet brim in a navy salute.

****Thanks again to Bahamut Crisis Core for lending me his OC's. Mat and Sapphire are making yet another appearance in my Fan Fictions, only slightly modified. Yes I added last names and developed their Cutie Marks for this story with his permission.****

****Please Review!****

****Sapphire was used with permission of Bahamut Crisis Core (Gods bless you, Brony)****

3. Setting Up Shop

****I should explain something now, before I lose a reader do to a bias. These ponies are not furrries. Furrries are animals with human characteristics and tendencies. This incarnation of Ponydom is more like a fantasy creature. They form in my mind as elves, only with broader features. IE: Wider and deeper ears, their nose is less narrow and angular and more broad and flatter. They have a horse tail, yes. Their hands are stronger, a little less delicate than an elf. Their nails are more opaque than a humans, also being thicker. They have no fur. This makes them also not furrries or scalies or aquatics or amphibians. They have skin that is colored as if it was fur, but it is skin. It is also thicker than a humans skin. Their builds are either broad or slender, and they are either stacked with muscles or lithe and slim. But no matter the size, their muscle density rivals a Spartan three's. this means if they have the form of a 160 pound model, they would weigh around 200 pounds. ****

****Also, I would advise favoring a Stones to Pounds or Stones to Kilograms converter on your browser. Seeing as Ponies are Greco-Roman in mythos on the show, I would prefer to use stones. ****

****Please enjoy! :)****

Kim accelerated along the dirt road, Sapphire much calmer than last time now that she had a firm seat. Kim had chosen the only vehicle that was fully operational and didn't a refill on its water reserve. It was the M12 FAV DF (Dense Foliage), or "Jungle Hog" in UNSC Jargon. It was more compact than the standard M12, being only five meters long and two meters wide. It had no windshield, a taller suspension lending it a roll ratio of five out of four turns, and was far less durable than the standard Hog. But despite all that, it made up for it with an increased speed of an even hundred miles per hour, enhanced tread on the tires, more power output by the transmission, and a weight distribution that would let it climb a fucking wall. For convenience's sake Kim tore the LAAG off the back, replacing it with a cargo cage and extra seats for personal arms and guards when they were needed; after finding Covenant in the remains of the Huntress Moon he knew there would be more elsewhere. He had fabricated skeletal style doors also, never feeling quite secure in the warthog without them.

They were half way to Ponyville according to both Baldur and Sapphire, The increase in foot mobiles on the road confirming their information. The ponies stopped and watched as the large jeep rolled by at a leisurely 30MHP, Sapphire waving to those she knew as they passed. Kim would reach into the cargo bed at random intervals, making sure his supplies and weapons were still there. "Why do you keep doing that?" Sapphire asked as he nearly hit her in the head.

Kim shook his head and shifted into a higher gear, slowing to ten MPH as they entered the city walls. He maintained the speed of the vehicle in front of him, smelling burning propane as he removed his helmet.

"I get nervous in these," He said, following her directions to her brother's house. "Back on Reach, when I was still in basic training, I rolled one of these things." He took a left when she prompted the turn, waving to the violet unicorn as they rolled to a stop. "It landed on top of me and snapped both of my legs. I had fifteen staples in both of them for a month as they healed in a cast." Kim finished, getting a grimace from Sapphire. Twilight jogged up to the driver's seat, looking the vehicle over. It was definitely alien in her mind.

"About time you two showedâ€¦" She stopped, sniffing the air and covering her face with a hand. "Sweet Celestia, which one of you crawled inside a dead animal?" Sapphire took a moment and sniffed as well, noticing the smell. "What were you two doing that made such a stench?" Kim climbed out of the vehicle, grabbing his bag of guns and another of what he could scavenge from the wreckage.

"That would be the smell of a Jackal," Kim informed, holding out a small fang he carried with him. It had been pulled from the mouth of his first hand to hand kill. "They are one of the members of the Covenant and they smell like rotten meat. Bad thing is when your out looking for them it isn't as prominent. It happens more when they're excited or scared. Speaking of which, do you know where I can find a water hose to wash my armor?" Twilight handed the inch long tooth back to him, raising an eyebrow in question. "We ran across a team of them andâ€¦" He stopped, trying to break the fact easier to her. She didn't look to be much older than sixteen, and he was loath to harm any innocence that might be there.

"You had to," She said, touching him on the shoulder. "I understand. Things happen in war, and nopony likes to do it. But its fight or die," Kim looked at her, finding her expression solemn. "My brother is guar captain for the Royal Guard. He's fighting on the zebra front out to the east." Kim was surprised that war was so common here. Everything was so peaceful in this place, but every higher thinking race has disagreements. Kim patted her on the shoulder, getting a smile back to her face. "There's a garden hose out behind the library," She said, pointing to a converted tree. "I live there, so don't worry about any trouble for trespassing." Kim nodded, thanking her before walking off to the tree/house. Sapphire went in the opposite direction, knocking on the door of the house across the street.

Kim set down the bags, his armor still dripping from the rinse. He hadn't noticed how much blood he had on him until the water hit the plates and made something akin to grape 'Kool-aide'. 'No wonder I smelled to high hell,' he thought, setting his helmet back on. He picked the bags back up, walking out to the street and setting the bags in the cargo bed. in the bag of salvage was a hammer drill, several gun racks from the Huntress Moon, and a box of bolts. He went about attaching the racks to the bed, deciding on putting them on the floor and keeping the seats. As he worked the ponies went about their business, some drawn over to look as they heard the strange noises. Kim spent the next five minutes securing the gun racks, making sure that even he couldn't remove them by hand.

Sapphire was in the street side bedroom with her brother Mat Shield, observing Kim as he worked on the Warthog. "What in the name of the princesses is he doing?" Mat asked, his voice a high baritone. Sapphire gave him a glance returning to her watch afterward. Mat was tall, but not as tall as Kim. He was six feet tall and not a hair more. His looked around two hundred and fifty pounds, but like most ponies it was deceptive. Mat weighed an even one seventy, his muscles slight but dense. His mane reached the bottom of his shoulder blades, being brown with gold bangs. There were seven locks in the gold that were currently a bright blue and green, matching his eyes. He wore a black business suit with a red tie and white shirt, his skin the color of an opal and glowing slightly in the light.

AN: Yeah, hey. I'm gonna break the fourth wall here and clarify this fact. When your skin is really fucking pale, you will glow. I mean physically glow if any light hits your skin in a dark room. Kind of like white socks. He isn't a gay twilight vampire, so there. Bye.

"He's putting a gun rack in the Warthog," She said, watching as he began to load it with the weapons and magazines. The rifles would attach to the rack on the shoulder butt, locking into place along the barrel as it was lowered into the groove upside down. "I don't think I've seen a soldier that organized," She said, getting an amused scoff from Mat. "You know what I mean. None of the ponies use efficiency like he does, not even the Celestial Guard. I'm starting to feel glad Celestia ordered me to watch him." She turned away from the window, seeing him begin to sort through the salvage and already knowing what he had found. "Now, What have you been up to?" Mat waved his hand, motioning around the room.

"Look around you, sis," He said, turning around and opening a cabinet containing gold and platinum records. "I've produced three albums, one that went quadruple platinum and two that went gold instantly. I have mares hanging on me where ever I walk and fan mail by the bag every day." Sapphire leaned against the window frame, looking back into the street o make sure Kim hadn't walked off like he does. "Things happen when you leave home for the guard and become an instant captain, Blue." Mat opened the door, motioning out to her. "An I can see you're preoccupied," She shook her head, walking out as he held the door. "I don't mind, honestly. You've always been the kind to never sit still if there was nothing dangerous goin on."

Kim was currently holding plates of Titanium up against the cargo cage, marking them off with a black chalk to work on later. If he was going to be transporting guards with flintlocks around to fight Covenant then he wanted as many to survive insertion as possible. This meant weeks of fabrication to armor the Warthogs he had, months of training them to drive the unwieldy vehicles properly and even more time to make them proficient in effective tactics. He bent the metal plate he was holding, two ponies commenting in hushed tones on the strength of the armored being as they passed. He held the plate up against the cage, satisfied with the angle. He placed it in the cage as Sapphire walked out of the house, kissing her brother on the cheek. She walked up to the jeep, leaning against the cab as he walked around and bent another piece of Titanium-A plate to match the other. "Almost done here," He said, retrieving the largest plate he had brought and holding it against the back of the cage. It was squared and projected from the frame oddly. He marked it off larger

than the framework turning it around and holding it against the frame again. "Do you know where I can do some welding where none of the ponies will see me?" He asked, punching the metal with both fists. The plate dented inward, creating a squared bubble. He held it up again, finding the marks to be flush with the frame. He tossed it in the back and opened the driver side cage, lifting it over head.

"Why wouldn't you want anypony to see you welding," she asked, following his cue and climbing into the vehicle. Kim sat in his seat, pulling the cage door down and starting the engine. The hydrogen combustion power plant roared as it started, idling down to a quiet purr. "Welding isn't uncommon, Kim." He shook his head, pointing to the arc welder in the back.

"Safety reasons," He said, shifting into second gear and starting off down the road at a slow pace. "The welder I use makes a blindingly bright light that will harm anything that looks at it without proper protective gear." She motioned to the right, directing him somewhere. He trusted her skills, following her directions to where they needed to go the most.

"You might have to leave town if we don't find a garage willing to let you borrow space," She said, maneuvering her tail out from under her and onto her leg. "And I think that might be the best choice anyway. The ponies here are trusting, but only once they get to know you." Kim nodded, slowing to a stop at a sign. He had noticed the ponies were wary of him, eyeing the weapons he carried most of all while he was placing them in their racks. As the cars passed, he took off his helmet and removed Baldur's data card. He placed it in the dashboard, a small projection of the Scandinavian modeled body appearing on the screen.

"It's only logical," The AI said. "Caution around an unknown being is to be expected. I suggest making friends, let the word spread that you aren't to be feared." Kim scoffed, knowing that was a flat out lie as he continued through town. "Ok, not to be feared until you get pissed off." Kim smirked and shook his head, turning left at Sapphire's request. She ordered him to stop in front of the large three story building at the end, climbing out and opening the front gates. Kim pulled in, stopping so she could get back in after closing the gate again. They continued along the drive way, parking outside the building on its right side.

The two entered the tower, Kim looking around to take in the sights. It was an office building built in the oriental Bagota style, the tiers reachable through a spiral staircase in the center of the structure. Ponies in suits and formally casual shirts and slacks milled around the area, paying no attention to them save for an apology when they nearly ran into them. Sapphire led Kim to the top floor, eyeing him as the wooden stairs creaked under his step. Kim shrugged as they ascended the spiral. "The armor weighs a lot," he explained. "More than any you might have access to here." They crested the stairs, the level being different from both lower floors. This level was lit by large picture windows all around the walls, the only area that wasn't walled off lay before them. A tan colored pony with a black mane and tail sat behind a desk, dressed in a gray suit with a skirt that reached halfway up her thighs in her sitting position. Her legs were crossed and her tail draped over them as she stared at them.

"Can I help you two?" She asked in a not unkind tone, seeming genuinely interested in why the guard captain and an upright tank were in her office. "If you wish to see the mayor then she will be out shortly. She is currently in a meeting." The pony returned to her paper work, handing them both forms to fill out. Kim took the pen Sapphire handed him. as they walked to their seats, Kim looked over the paper; finding the script hard to read. His implanted translation programs were trying all known human and covenant languages, coming up short each time. It bared a resemblance to Forerunner and Greek, along with the language the Elites wrote in, but none of it came together. Sapphire watched him as he stared at the paper, his brow furrowed and wrinkled in frustration.

"You ok?" She asked, getting a shrug in return. Kim handed her the paper, tossing up his hands.

"I can't read this," He explained. "You ponies use the same language verbally that I do, but your writing is so different that I can't figure it out." Sapphire filled out the information for him, asking him how to spell it in sounds. Kim watched as she wrote, his implants finally understanding the language. It was more related to Arabic and Hebrew in style, the script flowing and spelling the words in sound instead of individual letters. Sapphire handed him back the paper when she was finished, Kim looking it over carefully and fully. It was a verification of residence, Sapphire having filled out the information for a new citizen. The door opened to the mayor's office, a unicorn in a close fitting, hooded black cloak walking out and shaking the mayors hand.

The unicorn was lithe, slim and black; his coat contrasted by his dark red mane and what was visible of his tail. His horn was as black and opaque as a spire of onyx; the extremity thin and around a foot long. "Thank you again for clearing that incident up," He said to her, getting a modest bow in return. "I cant thank you enough." She shook her head, smiling.

"You don't have too Black Fire," She said, using the black unicorn's name. "You lost control, I understand. It could have happened to anypony. I'm just glad you reigned it in as quickly as you did." The unicorn nodded and thanked her again, pulling his hood up over his head as he descended the stairs. Sapphire and Kim stood up as the mayor approached them nodding to her and holding her hand out to the new face. "Hello, I'm Ivory Scroll," She said, making the introductions. "I am the mayor of Ponyville. To whom do I owe this visit?" Sapphire held up a scroll, a stylized sun emblazoned on a red ribbon with gold wax. "Ah," Ivory said, taking the scroll and opening it carefully. "A message directly from the princess." She read it over, looking up at Kim every so often. He returned her discriminatory stare with a passive one, simply looking through her. She rolled up the parchment, handing it back to Sapphire. "I am to provide you with whatever accommodations you require, set up a monthly salary for a guard position alongside Captain Shield, and if necessary, have a tutor sent to you so you may learn our scripted language and Geography." Kim counted the items in his mind, marking out one of them already. "So how can I help?" She added with a smile.

Kim looked at Sapphire, getting a shrug and, 'your choice'. Kim shuffled in place, the floor creaking. "First, I think we should get to solid ground," He advised at the beams groaned again. "I will meet

you down on the dirt." With that, Kim turned toward an open window and jumped out. A moment later they felt the floors shake and heard a loud thump, Kim having landed to uncertain injury. The two mares exited the building, town hall, and were met by a slightly dusty Kim. He patted his rear clean of dust, following it up with his legs.

"Now, I have the nerves to talk. I apologize for making such a dramatic exit, but five of these suits weigh as much as my vehicle." Sapphire and Ivory Scroll were both amazed at the numbers, the vehicle looked to them like it weighed more than a train. "Now for having accommodations set up, I would prefer it outside of town. I will be doing some rather loud work for about a month and I don't wasn't to disturb any neighbors." Kim fought his face for control of the muscles, suppressing a smirk at the ironic situation. The mayor waved a pony in a business suit over, sending him after something. The pony returned moments later, holding several small maps and forms.

"This is what we have outside of the city limits," Ivory said, handing him the maps and their corresponding property deeds. "Like I said before, any of these will be completely free of cost to you. The bill is to be sent directly to the Royal Treasury and from there the money will be returned to the fair towns ponies." Kim looked the map over, noting how much land was on the deed and what covered it. there was one with six acres of wild growth forest. It was about a kilometer from town at one end, meaning once he had the falcon he saw fixed up he could begin transferring the vehicles and working on them.

"This one," He said, handing the mayor the deed and map. "It's far enough away that I won't be a bother and close enough that I can be anywhere in town if I'm needed quickly." Ivory Scroll nodded, handing the Spartan back the deed with a pen. Kim signed the paper where he needed to, Sapphire filling out the Treasury purchase forms and handing them back to the mayor.

"That should do it," She said, rolling up the deed and sealing it with a stamp of preheated wax. She gave him the parchment, taking the carbon copy and handing it to the pony she had called out. "The property is currently vacant, so you can move in immediately. I will leave you to it," She said, shaking their hands and walking back inside. Kim and Sapphire climbed into the hog, Kim starting the engine as Sapphire closed her cage door. They pulled out of the driveway, Sapphire directing him down a side road so they could bypass the traffic. They sped out of the city walls moments later, Kim picking up speed and taking a right at Sapphires direct.

Kim gave her a sideways glance, placing his helmet on with one hand. "Have you ever gone off-roading before?" He asked, remembering his lessons in evasive insertion with glee. She shook her head as Kim gripped the hand brake. "Hold on," He said with emphasis, pulling the brake and taking a hard left off the road. They jumped over the berm at speed, landing twenty feet away from their launch point with a thud. Kim continued to pull hard, swinging turns; Sapphire being tossed around the cab like a rag doll each time they slid over a bump. Kim was laughing heartily as she squealed with surprise and fright, seeing the house through the trees ahead. "Time to start clearing out these trees," He shouted as he pulled the E-brake. The hog slid to a stop, Sapphire holding onto the dash so she wouldn't be thrown through the front of the cab cage. Kim reached back into the cargo bed, pulling out the Gillian nonlinear rifle and sitting back

down. "Cover your ears," He said holding down the charge button. Sapphire did as he ordered, cupping the sides of her head as he pulled the trigger.

The rifle blasted light and particles out of its barrel, striking an over charged hit on the trees in its path. The red beam tore through the wide trunks of the hardwood growth, toppling the twenty in the way. Sapphire jumped back into her seat as the concussion hit her, quickly checking to make sure she hadn't wet her pants. Kim turned around, placing the weapon back in its cradle before driving forward. The trunks hindered their progress, but only slightly. The four point individual suspension allowed the hog to climb over them with ease, a few simply being knocked out of the way by the bumper and forward hooks.

****Alright. So what do you think, is it good? I think it's so good it needs reviews! :D****

****Ivory Scroll is the officially unofficial name for the mayor of Ponyville, by the way and for your information.****

****Sapphire and Mat are property of and used with permission from Bahamut Crisis Core.****

****Black Fire is property of and used with permission from Najee.****

4. An Unexpected Reunion

****I Do Not Own My Little Pony or Halo. All Rights Reserved Lauren Faust, Bungie, 343, Microsoft and Hasbro.****

Kim lay underneath the chassis of a Warthog replacing an axle brace with one he had fabricated. He had gotten the Falcon up and running in spectacular time, the parts required being present on the section of the Huntress Moon. Since then, he had spent the previous seven days moving vehicles out of the husk, airlifting them to his new base of operations. He had found four Hogs, an Arctic Hog, a Scorpion main battle tank, seven Mongooses and a demolished Pelican gunship. He had scavenged the Pelican, no parts being present for recovery and neither the materials nor the means to fabricate them. He shimmied out from under the Hog, lifting the bumper with his Mk V battle suit as he climbed up. He reached in, pressing the button start. The engine shuddered a couple times, purring softly after idling down. He nodded to himself, content with the progress he had made on all the vehicles.

The Scorpion was fully functional, as were the rest of them save the Arctic Hog. The arctic crawler required more work than he could allow, the clutches being shot alongside the hydrogen ignition chamber. "I should consider myself lucky I have these running," He mumbled to no one as he surveyed his fleet. They were banged up, scarred and burnt slightly on the outside but sound internally. "Especially considering that I didn't have to replace the clutches on the tank." He mused, shouldering the bag of tools at his feet. He exited the garage he had constructed to protect the vehicles from the weather, viewing his property.

He had cleared the majority of it by hand, bringing the trees down

with an axe or fire and pulling them away by hand. There were stands of them still around the property, the majority of them providing shade to the two story house. It was a simple affair, if not down right modest. Kim had cleared most of the furniture present in the building, having a large bed and a table to eat at almost the sole articles. He kept the den in full function if guests visited, which they had nearly the same day he arrived. Twilight, the unicorn he had met, brought her friends to meet him the next morning. He remembered at the fore of his mind a pony with no horn or wings, her skin the color of butternut squash and her hair the color of golden hay. She had a rural draw also, reminding him of his home on Harvest before the fall. She had offered to help him around his homestead, clearing the trees with him and even bringing her young sister to assist in the restoration of the Falcon.

The filly, Applebloom, was quite a talented mechanic and engineer. She had figured out how the rotors worked moments after viewing the parts Kim had skewed around it. She put it together flawlessly, noticing several advanced avionics components were missing and even crafting makeshift replacements the same day. The Falcon was flight ready as soon as the hydrogen was converted from the water he had added to the tanks, removing the compacted detritus to save on weight. He and Applebloom had spent that day flying the vehicles back and forth from the husk of the Huntress Moon to his house, erecting a frame for a large garage before taking her to her family orchard.

Kim had taken up an offer from a pegasus the next morning. Her skin was a light blue, her eyes a brilliant violet red and her mane and tail a mash-up of primary and secondary colors. She had boasted the day prior that she could do anything he couldn't reach, even going as far as to prove herself by fixing his weathervane. Kim had to admit, the sight of self powered flight was astounding and awe inspiring. The pony's wings were each twice again as long as her body when extended, meaning they had to have either hollow bones or massive muscle strength. He suspected both, the light weight allowing the muscles to retain strength without building too much mass. That day they had worked on erecting the walls and laying the roof of the garage, Kim having her set up a pulley so he could set up the mobile section of the roof for the Falcon.

Kim walked along the path that had formed over the last week between the house and the garage, inspecting the layout of his land with a critical eye. He was a soldier, foremost if not first, and needed a place to produce the weapons of his kind. The chemicals seemed to be lying around on this planet, Kim having found a chunk of raw titanium ore just laying in a field, so all he needed was a safe and secure place to set up the machinery he needed. He knew whatever he made wouldn't be able to compete with genuine Misriah products, but they would suffice for the time he would be on the planet. What he needed was ammunition, but he also considered having to train the locals to fight the Covenant should they rear their ugly, split chinned heads. He decided on the midway point of the path to build a small out building, disguising the weapons as a tool shed. The sun was beginning to set as he walked up to the door of his house, still not considering anything but Harvest "home". Sapphire, the Guard Captain, opened it, letting him in. She had been ordered to study him, and that she did. Day or night, rain or shine she would follow him, observing and taking notes sometimes. Kim had to put limits on her access when she pulled back the shower curtain one morning to see if

humans and ponies bathed in the same manners.

"About time you came in," she chided, taking the white apron off and tossing it in a laundry basket. She had changed her normal attire of a mottled green traveler/hunter cloak and guard uniform for simple oxblood leather leggings and a black tee-shirt. "I just made some food and was wondering if you wanted some. Kim walked past her, dropping his tool bag beside the door.

"Living in my house," He said, turning around and holding up a finger. "Demanding to be allowed in my personal room at any time," he added, holding up another finger. "The shower, 'Incident'," he said, making air quotes and causing her to blush slightly. "And now you're making me dinner. Are you sure you aren't trying to just get in bed with an alien? I know that's some kind of erotic fantasy for many humans, butâ€¦" He gave her a sly grin as she looked away, her face red with embarrassment and her eyes narrow.

"Look," She said heatedly. "I was charged by the princesses to watch and observe you so I can better my own tactics. And the shower thing was an honest curiosity," Kim stared at her for a moment, his expression unchanging. His stare caused her to blush further, her deep blue skin becoming a very bright purple. Kim crossed his arms, leaning on a wall and holding his smirk. Sapphire continued to look away, her resolve fading under his gaze. She sighed, giving up. "I never said what kind of curiosityâ€¦" she muttered, unsure if he had heard her before she made her way back into the kitchen. "I made an Island delicacy I picked up from a local during a deployment," she said, dishing up vegetables and fruit on two plates. "It's an ocean fish recipe, but considering we only have river fish hereâ€¦ I used trout. It tastes close, but I need a real grouper steak for the meal to be at it's best. It's several cooked, sautÃ©ed and glazed fruits and vegetables under the fish fillet and covered with fried mango chunks." Kim walked up behind her, touching her on the shoulders and causing her to stop moving with the skillet in her hand. He took a piece of the fried mango, tasting it and chewing slowly.

"It's delicious," he said, having removed his armor in the time span of her absence from the den. He was wearing a reactive cloth jumpsuit, the smell of sweat and oil heavy on the fibers and in Sapphires nose. He let her go, walking around her and taking both plates to the table. He set them on the oak surface, placing silverware and glasses of Sweet Apple Wine in their places. "You know, I don't mind if you have some strange attraction to me." He shrugged, pulling back the chair as she sat down before easing it forward. "I just hope you know I have no want for any kind of relationship." He sat on the other side, placing a napkin in his lap. Sapphire stopped her hand midway to her mouth, confused by the statement.

She set her fork down, placing her hands on the table and interlacing her fingers. "What do you mean," She asked as Kim took a bite of his food. "I have never heard of anything not wanting even a slight amount of love in their lives. As far as I am concerned, it's an impossibility to not long for something in another." Kim wiped his lips on another napkin after replacing his fork on the plate, picking up his glass and taking a sip of the wine.

He raised his free hand in a gesture of feeble resign, setting the glass down. "Humans as a species do want for companionship," he said

as he leaned back in his seat. "But I am not a normal human anymore." Sapphire raised an eyebrow, silently inquiring as to his meaning. "A Spartan like me is altered so we can wear the armor suits. We are given injections that cause our muscles to increase in density, coatings to our bones to make them nearly indestructible, alterations to our eyes and ears so that we can see in the dark and hear things normal beings can't. And in the process, a certain chemical is added to our bodies that negates the sex drive and reproduction craving. We are soldiers and nothing more now. I will never have a family of my own, not because it is impossible but because I have no want for one." Sapphire shook her head slowly in disbelief. She had not considered him as a mate seriously, but even the thought was now to fantastical to hold interest.

"I couldn't imagine an army like that," she said, continuing shake her head. "To have no love or compassion is just unethical." Kim stopped her with a hand, finishing his bite before talking.

"Not without compassion," he clarified. "Spartans are just augmented to have no want for procreation. I can love someone all day, but I'm not going to try and sleep with them." There was a noise on Sapphire's short wave radio, the sound of chatter picking up considerably. They shared glances before running to the den. Sapphire took the radio as Kim donned his armor, preparing for anything out of a trained reflex. She left the room for a minute, returning in full bronze plate armor uniform and green cloak. Kim had readied all but his sleeves and helmet, the clasp on the left one giving him difficulty. She slapped his shoulder pad hard, fastening the latch afterward without a word. "What's the problem?" he asked, his right sleeve going on without complaint. Sapphire cursed as she heard a code, something very bad was about to go down and Kim could feel it. Literally.

She was about to reply to his question as a deep boom sounded, followed with a vibration in the air that Kim knew all too well. "Covenant," he said, slamming his helmet home and plugging Baldur into his neural lace. "Come on," he said to Sapphire, handing her a BR55. "We're taking the Falcon. The trajectory Baldur is projecting should land it in the Green Isle's area." She nodded, following him after he grabbed his weapons and ammo.

Kim had stopped at Canterlot briefly at Sapphire's bequest, picking up a four stallion crew of spec-ops ponies. They wielded automatic weaponry and advanced metal armor, placing them barely on par with the Covenant. Kim activated the bay speakers, issuing orders. "Alright, Listen up!" the crew looked up at the roof of the bay, waiting for more. "These are enemies far greater than any of you have ever faced. I want eyes all around and two of you on the door guns. Left black followed by right red, that's how they work. Controlled bursts only. The rest of you will be following me into the jungle after whatever survived the apparent crash, got it?" a loud battle roar came through the sealed glass of the cockpit, affirming his suspicions. They had been over the water for a half hour already, beginning to wonder if the island even existed until Sapphire pointed an emerald dot out on the horizon. It was small, only large enough for a single dropship, but it was densely covered in jungle and cliffs. Kim was thankful for the landing zone, but detested the open area. "Lock and Load!" he called back, the sounds of cycling chambers resounding through the bay.

Kim led the mission through the forest towards the covenant craft Baldur was monitoring. Apparently the craft, a Seraph starfighter, had crashed after being thrown from slip-space on the green isle. He knew that whatever Covenant was present would set up a sub-light transponder to arrange a pickup, thus they had to be eradicated. If the prophets found Equestria it would end certainly in a glassing. They walked through the foliage for ten minutes, Kim at the for so a path could be plowed by him through the vines and brush. They had just stopped for water when Kim's long range monitors picked up a sound. It was gunfire, meaning something moderately friendly or neutral was engaging the hostiles. "That's not one of ours," Sapphire said as the sound echoed through the trees. It was followed closely by the sounds of semi-automatic fire of a type Kim was unfamiliar with. it came in staggered twos, one being fired nearly instantly with another. "But I know who that is," she said, taking off toward the fire. Kim followed quickly, the Equestrian Regular Army fireteam following close behind. They came upon the crash sight, the Seraph smoldering in a crater after the crash. He spotted tracer rounds issuing from the opposite side of the ship.

"Flash!" Kim called out into the leveled clearing. He waited as the gunfire ceased, Sapphire nodding to him and flanking around toward the round's intended target. Kim crouched beside a tree, waiting for the recall. "Flash or I will fire!" he called again, this time hearing what he wanted to.

"Thunder!" the voice came, a canister being thrown over the Seraph. It went off with a flash and a loud explosion, the nine banger having no effect on Kim. The ponies reeled backward, clutching their faces and ears. "Are you alone?" the voice came, a distinctive cocky attitude creeping into the words. Kim knew exactly who it was; the cowboy from Noble Team named Thom.

"Yeah," Kim lied, ordering the ponies to stay put. "I'm coming to you, hold tight." He said, getting a thumbs up from over the Seraph. He made his way over, climbing over the ship with ease and leveling his weapon on the fellow Spartan. "Reach for the sky, rustler." Kim lowered his weapon as Thom laughed, holding out a hand to help his comrade up. They stood face to face, sharing a handshake they had developed during basic. "What the hell are you doing here, Thom," Kim asked, letting go of his hand. "Last I heard you were running around with Noble." The soldier shrugged, slipping his BR55 behind his back.

"We intercepted a transmission from the Covenant command," Thom explained, opening the cockpit of the Seraph and reaching in for something. "We deployed to a factory colony in the same system as Reach in order to intercept a Cruiser. Our plan was to nuke it, but Kat was hit and lost an arm so I had to take the nuke. I was the only other one on the fireteam that had a pack to reach it. I didn't have enough time to escape before they jumped out of the atmosphere, so I jacked a Seraph and launched out into the event. I ended up here." He came back out with a busted jet pack and another rifle, a DMR. "Speaking of which, where in the universe are we?" Kim was about to reply when a Pegasus with a sand colored body emerged from the trees. She wore a forest green shirt with the sleeves rolled up. Her legs were covered with black cotton cargo pants and the hips had a cutaway, revealing a compass rose on her outer thigh. Her hair and tail were shiny black and rather long, the locks reaching her hips and calves. She held two semi-automatic handguns; around .500

calibers if Kim's guess was right, which were raised and pointed at both Spartans.

"Don't move!" she motioned with her weapons for them to raise their hands. The two refused, Thom pulling a plasma grenade out of her line of sight. "I said don't move," she barked, putting both pistols in the direction of Thom. "Put that blue whatever down and get your bucking hands up!" Thom pressed the button to activate the grenade, about to throw it at her. Kim grabbed his arm, shaking his head and tossing the grenade away from the ponies. "Who the buck are you two? Answer me!"

"We're friendly," Kim said, holding a hand up next to his head as the grenade detonated in a blue cloud of plasma. "So you can put the guns away." The mare shook her head, glaring at Thom.

"I don't think I will," she growled, stepping closer to her target. "This flankhole shot at me." Thom held up his hands, defending himself.

"I thought you were Covenant," he explained. "I had no idea you were an ally, so I assumed the worst." Kim nearly face palmed, his helmet stopping him.

"Thom, what did the gunny tell us?" The Spartan chuckled, remembering their DI. "Assumption is the mother of all fuckery," they said at the same time.

"Yeah, I remember." Thom finished, pointing at the pony before him. "Doesn't help if they shoot back without declaring a position though," he shrugged before being slapped in the head by Kim.

"And that's why I outrank you," He said, walking toward the pony now that she had holstered her weapons on her thighs. He held out a hand after taking off his helmet, offering an olive branch in the name of humanity. "Kim Levinson." The mare took his hand and shook it quickly, letting go almost instantly and turning toward Sapphire as she emerged from the trees.

"Yeah, cool. Daring Do," She pointed to the blue soldier, walking over and holding her at finger point. "What in the name of all things adventurous are you here for?" she asked jokingly, bumping fists with Sapphire. She shrugged, nodding in Kim's direction after he turned away to talk to Thom.

"Culture study," she said, panting after having climbed two cliffs and pushed her way through heavy undergrowth. "On order of the princesses, I am to observe Kim's behavioral patterns so I can better my effectiveness." Daring Do looked in the direction of Sapphires gaze, noticing a flash of light that she knew all too well.

"Culture, huh?" She asked, punching the mare on the shoulder. "You sure you don't have anatomy on your mind instead?" Sapphire's face turned a light shade of purple, growing deeper as she thought about it. Daring Do laughed quietly at her old friend's reaction. Sapphire shook her head, the blush beginning to fade.

"It wouldn't be worth the effort." She said in a defeated tone, punctuating the statement with a sigh before returning her view to

Daring Do. "He wouldn't be interested in anypony if they were stark nude and practically begging him." Daring raised an eyebrow, thoroughly interested by this fact.

"So where are we," Thom asked as he cracked the maintenance panel on the Seraph open. "All of the ONI charts I have can't place a bead on this planet." Kim shrugged, taking the panel and laying it beside the ruined craft.

"They call it Equestria," Kim explained, taking a Gyroscope out of the craft. "And they call themselves Ponies." This worked a snort of derision out of Thom. Kim smirked at his reaction, glad he wasn't the only one who found it crazy. "I'm serious, they have ponies, pegasus, and unicornsâ€¦ all that ancient roman shit here. They write in a style akin to Hebrew and Arabic from earth though. The oral language is easily translated by the implants though." Thom nodded and agreed 'no shit' as they both tossed several burned up pieces of avionics out of the craft.

"At least you made friends with them," Thom said, inspecting a large motor component for vertical hover capabilities. "I doubt they have the weapons technology to withstand a single fireteam, let alone the entire UNSC. From what I saw on entry, they seem to have nothing more than basic firearms and a light understanding of industrialization." Kim chuckled to himself, helping Thom remove the large mechanical part out of the Seraph.

"You can't be serious," Daring said in a low voice, trying to keep the conversation as private as possible. "If anypony could get anything to mate with them, it would be you." She gestured at her. "I mean, damn Blue, even I had it in for you at one point. And just look at him. He is a soldier from another world, clad from head to hoof in literal shining armorâ€¦ And your just giving up because he says he doesn't want to?" she made an exasperated gesture, fighting hard to keep her voice low. "What is going on under that blue mane of yours?" Sapphire shrugged, shaking her head slowly and letting her rifle hang loose in her grip.

"Dareâ€¦" She began to retort but fell short, looking up at the clouds as they slowly drifted by in the sky. "I gave an honest effort, I really did. But a week after he got a house to stay at until the rest of the humans come to get him he told me at a meal, the one his apparent friend ruined I might add." Daring Do was listening intently, her arms crossed over her chest. "What makes his position so alluring, being the best in the universe as we know it, is a littleâ€¦ off. When he was given this armor, he was changed biologically. The chemicals and processes they used negate any natural want to reproduce. I doubt he would want a mate if it was a life or death situation." She looked back over her shoulder at the two, who were tearing the craft apart for parts. "It's kind of tragic in a way; to be the last hope for your race in a war, but unable to contribute to its continuance."

"That's not entirely correct," Kim called out after pulling a large block of mechanical parts from the Seraph. "Spartans don't have any drive for it, but that doesn't mean we are unable to reproduce." Kim walked up to the two after setting down the large component. "And you should remember exactly what was augmented before gossiping about me." He slipped his thumbs under the jaw line of his helmet, pulling it from its latches and handing it to Sapphire. "I can still hear you

from almost a mile away at that volume." He turned around with a smile, nodding to Daring Do before rejoining Thom at the ship. "Alright, lets blow this scrap heap sky high!" Thom was already setting charges as Kim loaded the parts onto a sled. "You four, pull this behind me," he picked up a Defoliant Projector from the ground, walking to the tree line. "I'll clear a path, just watch out for the flames." He pulled the trigger, launching Napalm four feet into the underbrush.

****What's this? Is there love in the eyes of a pony for yet another human?****

****Maybe, but this is going to stay sex scene free. XP****

****Anyway, I'm sorry for being so postponed in posting this pony fic (see what I did there?). but I have reasons. One, I found a job that pays and have had literally no time for writing (or sleep) until recently. I hope to get them up once a week if I can. ****

****Please Review! :)****

5. A Gift From A True Friend

****I do not own MLP or HALO. All rights reservedâ€|****

****Fucking disclaimersâ€|****

The Falcon landed in the flowerbeds of the Castle Garden, dust and pollen billowing forth from the vividly shaded cups. Guards and servants alike gathered a safe distance away from the incoming craft, a mixture of fear and awe filling them alike. Five feet from the air four ponies in full armor jumped out, running toward where a door had opened in the side of the castle as two winged and horned figures entered the clearing. As the craft landed, the two and their entourage approached. Two ponies, one Pegasus and the other earth, along with two fully armored Spartans exited the craft, the latter climbing down from the cockpit as the glass rose up.

"Daring, Sapphire," Celestia said, walking closer as the rotor blades ceased spinning. "I haven't seen you both anywhere near each other since Daring left the guard academy. Tell me what draws you both to my doorstep." The two knelt and bowed their heads.

"A new arrival, your Majesty," Sapphire said, standing as she was ordered to. Daring Do waved the two humans over before speaking.

"I was investigating the rumored existence of the crystal skull in the Green Isles, Your Majesty," Daring Do informed. "That is until this thing crashed into the entrance to a lost tomb I had found and began shooting at me." Kim came to attention alongside Thom, throwing the princesses a lazy salute.

"I see yet another being has come to visit our world," Celestia spoke to Thom. "May I know the name of this spacial knight?" Luna rolled her eyes out of view of her sister, shaking her head as she walked over to Kim, leading him out of earshot.

"Yes Princess?" Kim asked in a not unkind tone, following her to a patch of shade. The tree they were now under had a rampant wisteria

vine in it, the fuchsia blooms filling the air with a calming scent that mixed well with the smell of turned soil. Luna motioned for him to sit, taking her place against the tree before bringing her knees up to her chest. Her attire had changed since Kim had first met her. She now wore a pair of black leggings that clutched her skin smoothly. Around her thighs was a skirt that rose to mid-way and her torso was adorned with a silver threaded shirt with no sleeves.

"My sister is blind," she said bluntly as he sat beside her, his rifle rested against a knee. "She thinks not of what your offer entails. The war your race fights may very well wind up as our own, and she is too tamed by this peace we live in to see this." she extended an arm toward the small crowd before them. "Just look, Spartan, see for yourself. Even a soldier that is as wounded as Sapphire is blind to the dangers of this pact." Kim looked over the four, noticing what she meant.

Celestia's eyes were slightly fogged, Luna was right. She held herself with an air of ease and aloof manner, seemingly less blind but more without care. Kim took off his helmet, setting it on the ground beside himself. "Yeah, you're right," he said, running his hand through his lengthening crew cut. "Just having contact with us could bring the Covenant down on you like a hammer of some malicious god." Luna wrapped her arms around her legs, pulling them closer to her chest. "But the terms still stand. If the Covenant arrives here, the UNSC will deliver every single available warship to protect your peaceful way of life. Whether you fight with us or stay out of the action, you are our allies now and will be treated as equals." Luna looked at him as he let out a slight chuckle. "But I wouldn't put it past the marines to try and bed down with your race, especially the earth ponies." Luna smiled, letting out a smidgeon of laughter.

"Yes, well I suppose it would be an inevitability we shall face as it arises," she relented. "But we will not stand aside and let the ponies be slaughtered. If such a situation arises, my sister and I shall fight them ourselves." They sat in silence for a few uncounted minutes, Luna enjoying the garden's scents, sounds and sights while Kim silently waited for further questioning or release from the conversation. "What is your home called, Spartan?" Luna asked, looking at him. Kim turned his vision to the sky, observing a cloud before a group of Pegasi demolished it with passes of their wings.

"Harvest," he said his voice somber and slightly troubled. "It isâ€¦ was, the farthest of the human colonies in the Orion arm of the galaxy. It was primarily a farming world, but it had large cities and mines, factories and lumber mills." Luna watched as the hardened edges of the alien soldier began to soften, revealing what once was the permanent. "The Covenant attacked it first in their crusade against my race, practically wiping all forms of life from the surface. I lost my mother, brother and sister, father and grandparents in that single failed defensive." Kim looked away from the sky, taking every detail of the wisteria he could find in the large and ancient oak. Luna looked away, finding a small patch of bare wall.

"I'm sorry," Luna said, feeling bad for having brought the dark memories out of their place in his mind. "I understand what it's like to lose everypony you thought close, I really do." Kim looked at the

ground, picking up his helmet and holding it in his hands. He had to admit, even if he hated ONI for what they did to him, they had saved his life.

"I didn't know about it until I graduated from my training schools," He informed, wiping a smudge of dirt from the helmet with a thumb.

"Neither did I until I tried to find them again," Luna said, getting an inquiring glance from Kim. She sighed, ready for him to discount her story. "I may look young, and so may my sister, but we are well over two thousand years old each. I was corrupted by an evil being a long time ago, at which point I committed so many atrocities that my sister was forced to use a powerful magical artifact to send me to the moon. I was imprisoned there for a thousand years, and upon my return I continued to commit them only under the control of another being. That is until the mares you met in Ponyville freed me of it using the same artifacts. Now, a thousand years after my corruption and banishment, not a single pony that I knew on any level alive, each one is dead and gone. Their grandfoals foals bear the same name, but have no clue who I am." Luna ended her narration on that note, standing and offering Kim her hand. "The sun sets and I must raise the moon," she said, letting her hand fall at her side as Kim kindly refused the offer. "Thank you," she said, fidgeting slightly. "Thank you for sharing past demons, and for not crediting my tale as fictitious."

"No disrespect intended, princess," Kim said, placing his helmet back on before standing on his own. "But this entire world seems to be something of a fairytale where I'm from." She shrugged slightly, taking the comment as it was.

"I must ask," Luna said as they began the short walk back to the group at a slow pace. "When do you suspect your UNSC will arrive to take you back to the front of your struggle?" Kim feigned thinking, having intentionally neglected to activate his subspace transponder.

"Hard to tell," he said, setting the top of the DMR Thom had given him between his shoulder plate and chest harness. If they do find me, they would have to make very short trips here, mapping out the area so when they travel back and forth they won't end up imbedded in a star. Slip-space travel is tricky from what I understand of it." Luna seemed to perk up at the mention of the travel subject.

"Do you mean folded space?" she asked, showing her intelligent side now. Kim gave her a shrug along with a nod. "If this slip-space is the same thing as folded space travel, then I understand the parameters. Our theories rely on magic to accomplish it, but the results of a miscalculation are just as dire." As they reached the group Celestia nodded to her sister, her demeanor now more serious.

"Sister, I believe we should give our guests permission to open a school." This caught Kim off guard, his head reeling internally to find a reason on its own. "From what I have gleaned from Thom, this covenant is merciless and brutal in their crusade. They will strike first and refuse to cease their assault until our entire race is extinguished. Our forces are unfit to fight this enemy, and I believe the only ones who can bring them up to standard are Kim and Thom."

Luna thought on the subject for a moment, deciding quickly on the option.

"As do I," she agreed. "The school will have my full support, and my section of the guard will take part." Celestia nodded, turning to Kim.

"And how do you feel about this Spartan?" She asked. "I have already gained Thom's pledge on the subject, and his involvement relies on your choice." Kim looked over the group, each but him and Thom holding a slight hint of fear in their eyes at what Thom had told them.

"I'll help," he said, glancing at Thom before finishing his sentence. "But we do this our way, and no one can interfere with our methods. I also want the ponies stationed at the fragment of the Huntress Moon and Sapphire to go through the training first. They already know what to expect from a race of the enemy, and are now invaluable to the defense." Celestia and Luna convened quickly giving him the go ahead nearly immediately. "Good. Have them report to my base four hours before sunrise. Thom, you are going to help me move the rest of the equipment today." The Spartan saluted, Kim ordering him and Sapphire into the Falcon.

The equipment had taken three hours to move, Kim and Thom salvaging an ammunition generator, rifle repair station, grenade assembly and cannon shell line from the Huntress Moon fragment. They had spent the remaining daylight hours constructing a building from hull plates to house the machinery. Night had fallen quickly afterward, the whole of Ponyville arriving at his house to initiate him into their society. A bonfire now roared in an empty field, the ponies gathered around for the ceremony. Kim stood on the porch of the house, leaning on a rail while wearing a Class-A uniform Rarity, a white unicorn Tailor in town, had made for him. His hair had been trimmed to a quarter inch high and tight, the sides and back of his head shaved skin tight. Thom stood next to him, his reactive composite under suit on instead of his armor.

"This place is much unprepared to defend against the covenant," Thom said, sitting in a wooden chair. "If they do show upâ€¦" he shook his head. "Harvest part two." Kim sighed, pushing off the rail to stare at him. Thom looked away as Kim crossed his arms. "No offense, but harvest was lost from day one Kim. We should have pulled out when they showed up. It would have saved a lot of lives." Kim shrugged, looking over his shoulder as he heard the sound of shuffling grass. Sapphire and seven other ponies were approaching from the fire, the followers waving as he looked at him.

"Hey," Kim said, waving back. "You mind telling me what exactly is about to go down?" Twilight, the violet unicorn he made contact with stepped up to the rail.

"We are going to place magical wards against hostile intruders," she explained. "The process uses dance and chant to amplify the magic by inducing a trance state in the owner of the property and the unicorns at play. Then, when everything is finished, we celebrate the new addition to the town with food and drink and very loud chatter." She smiled in a slightly pained way. "But I don't think me or Fluttershy will stay for very long after. She isn't much for parties and I have to do some work on a paper." Rainbow Dash, the Pegasus that had

helped him with the garage, spoke next.

"Rarity and I will be in the dancers, along with Sapphire. Her brother, Mat," She held out a hand to the pony next to her. His hair was dark brown with a golden streak on his bangs. His eyes were bright, glowing yellow and his smile was shark-like. "Will be in the chanters with Sweetie Belle and Fluttershy. Ivory Scroll will read off some official horse apples and then close it out. That's when it starts to get fun." Kim nodded, noticing the group's clothes were rather sparse. Applejack, Rainbow Dash and Sapphire wore very little; a couple of scraps of cloth for dignities sake were almost the only thing. Fluttershy and Mat wore rather respectable outfits, her outfit being a one piece, strapless blue dress and Mat wearing a three piece suit minus the jacket in the warm weather.

"So how long until the whole thing starts?" he asked, getting a shrug from the group.

"Whenever Princess Luna decides ta raise tha moon, sugar cube," Applejack said, her accent akin to the isolated wheat farmers of Harvest. "Could be a few hours, or if'n she's gonna make an appearance like we all think she is, it could begin in 'bout a couple o' minutes." As if on cue, a loud pop resonated through the clearing, startling everyone and the Spartans.

"Let the ceremony begin!" Luna cried out, her long, slender horn glowing with a silver light. As the light grew in size and intensity the horizon began to glow. The moon, full and bright silver, slowly began to rise, filling the night sky as stars began to wink into existence. The assembly cheered as the ponies lead Kim off the porch, pulling him to the fire and sitting him down nearest to the blaze. Luna took her seat next to him as the ponies scheduled to dance moves behind the large fire, the singers taking up station on either side. Next, around fifteen ponies in robes walked up to the opposite side of the fire, each holding a wood and animal hide drum of differing sizes. They set them down, lowering themselves onto their knees and producing two wooden rods from their sleeves. Ivory Scroll, the mayor of Ponyville took a place before the entire assembly.

"Tonight, we welcome a new race as one of our own," She said, pointing her hand at Kim. "This ceremony is to bind eternal, a sense of trust and good will to Kim Levinson and his people; the human race. Once the song and dance is over, I wish all of you to treat him as not a stranger, but as one of our own, as if a brother of the land, sky or the ether." She bowed slightly, moving into the crown as two ponies tossed more logs on the fire. Princess Luna took her seat next to him, smiling warmly as he looked at her. She wore a deep violet robe, her feet and hands bare.

"I've never actually been to one of these," She said, her voice filled with excitement. "But I hear it's taxing on the body of the initiate, the trance being something like a drug. You might want to hold onto somepony or something." She held out her hand as the first drum beat sounded, a deep, booming sound in the night. "If you do, I'm here." she finished, covering his hand with hers while smiling kindly.

Two more drumbeats filled the air, followed with the sound of sticks being tapped together lightly. The sound continued as the dancers came from behind the fire. They were all nude, the lack of clothing

necessary for the intricate maneuvers they were performing. The three mares slid around on the balls of their feet low to the ground, turning with precise and fluid motions as the beat began to increase in tempo. The full assembly of percussion instruments rang out with a loud beat, which the dancers responded to in kind with a remarkably high jump and turn, landing on their heels and spinning twice before rising to a full stand as the singers began to chant. The dancers moved slower now, spinning and ducking around each other as the singers continued. They sang of good fortune and a harmonious house, they sang of a fertile land and of bountiful harvests; all the while the drums gaining volume.

The dancers began to jump, cartwheeling through the air as they kept their close proximity to the fire and each other. The acrobatics were amazing, the flips, spins, and movements fluid and intricate. The sound of the drums began to lull Kim into a hypnotic state, his vision blurring and his head swimming. His eyes could no longer make out the details of the dancers, only their shadows and the light from the fire. His body began to sway, his motor functions falling from reach as the trance began to set in. He felt a pressure on his fingers, the grass on his ankles and the heat from the fire, saw the light and the shadows, the figures of the three ponies blurring into one as they kept up their manic pace.

Kim could not keep up with the time as it passed, feeling again as he had after he recovered from the augmentations. His movements seemed sluggish and heavy, though his body told him he was on target with each motion. Gravity seemed to fade away as the drums pounded in his head, his body feeling as if it had begun to float in the air. The shadow before him began to take a detailed figure, becoming something akin to a unicorn from the ancient earth myths. The figure walked towards him, Kim frozen in place by its stare.

"_To protect this world,"_ the unicorn said. "_You must learn to be compassionate and caring, to live in harmony with the ponies here. As you were made by man, so were the creatures here made by I. To fight the enemy on this land you must do what you must, but never treat one as if they were less than you. Just as humanity is, the ponies hold great potential for acts of heroism and valor. But they hold too the potential to wreak havoc and destruction upon the land. You are now the focus of a god, great king. Do not disappoint it."_ Kim stared at the unicorn through half lidded eyes, feeling like he had been sedated half way.

"My objective is to protect humans from the forces of the Covenant," he mumbled aloud. "But now it has changed. I will treat a pony's life as if it was one of mine, and never let the pain I know befall them as well. Equestria shall not become a second Harvest, the home I failed to save." The unicorn seemed to smirk at his self-ultimatum, turning around and separating into the three dancers again.

"_Don't make a god promises that you can't keep."_ Was all the being said as the dancers returned to the opposite side of the blaze. The drums slowed to silence, along with the sounds of chanting. Kim came back to full awareness in an unknown amount of time, finding himself in the arms of Thom. The Spartan was carrying him back to the tent the ponies had set up, approaching the back before setting him down.

"Are you ok, Commander?" Thom asked, laying Kim on a pile of straw.

He tapped him on the shoulder, shaking him firmly as Kim blinked and ran his tongue over his lips. "Can you hear me Sir?" Thom asked, getting a lazy nod in return. "Jesus Christ, Kim. You scared the living shit outta me back there. You fell out next to the fire for some reason." Kim pushed himself up to his knees, grasping Thom's shoulder for support. "What the hell happened?" Kim shook his head, staring at the ground before gagging. Thom let him go, Kim falling onto his hands before vomiting in the grass.

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you," Kim said, wiping his mouth with the back of a hand. "Shit, even I don't believe me right now." He looked around the area, trying to regain his bearings. He was still on his property, and there was definitely a party in the tent behind him. "You got any MRE's on you?" Kim asked. Thom motioned to the house.

"They're still in my armor," Thom said. "But they have real meat, bread, eggs, fruitâ€¦ you name it, it's there. And none of the powdered shit." Kim scoffed amusedly at Thom's joke. "Better than the damn UNSC cook corps from the look and smell." Kim pushed off from the ground grasping Thom's wrist for support as he stood up.

"That sounds like a plan," He said before letting go of Thom. "I don't think I've seen real eggs since I was a little kid." Thom laughed slightly as they walked around the corner of the tent. The sounds of partying hit them like a sonic boom, the loud conversation, music and singing overpowering all other sounds. The smells ranged from smoke and wood to melted sugar and burning meat, something neither Spartan had smelled in a long time that wasn't caused by a plasma wound. The gathered ponies turned and raised their glasses to them, cheering to Kim. Some motioned for him to have a drink or to try a dish they had brought, others offered him gifts and others still invited him to sit next to them. Within a minute, Kim held two quarts of an obviously alcoholic drink; three small gifts wrapped in colorful cloth, a loaf of bread, a strange looking casserole and had two children running around his feet. The kids looked at him with strange expressions, as if he was some sort of puzzle or a riddle.

"Run along young ones," A voice with growing familiarity said behind him. "There will be plenty of time for tales later." Princess Luna walked up beside him, turning the foals around and giving them a light push back to the tables. She stood back up, smiling and giggling quietly. "Quite a process, isn't it?" She asked, motioning to the crowd with her mug. "Only two days here and they've thrown you a welcome party. And out of their purse I might add." Kim nodded; taking a bite out of the loaf of bread he had been given. It was sweet bread; the grains used crunching slightly as he chewed.

"A far cry from what I'm used to," He said before taking a drink from one of the quart mugs. It tasted like a bitter type of wine, the alcohol content causing him to cough slightly. "Most humans shun strangers." Luna used her magic to levitate two chairs and a small table over to them, talking her seat after Kim did. He set the gifts and food on the table, tearing half of the loaf off and giving it to Luna. "So what do you think these are?" he asked, holding up one of the gifts. It was wrapped in a red and yellow striped cloth, the package bound at the top with a blue ribbon. Kim pulled on one of the ends of the ribbon, slowly undoing the knot as not to damage the fabric.

"Most likely a handmade item," Luna said as he laid the ribbon next to the gift. "Ponyville is known for its apples, Rarity's boutique and the crafting abilities of nearly all of its residents." Kim unfolded the stiff cloth, revealing a pendant made of white gold. The chain was platinum, being around twenty four inches long and the center of the pendant being filled with a large sapphire. The pendant was designed with two overlapping triangles, one vertical and the other inverted. "I could bet you my monthly wage as to who made this." Kim said, pointing into the crowd. Luna turned and followed his finger, finding Sapphire now fully clothed and talking with her brother Mat. Luna turned back around as Kim re wrapped the gift, placing it out of the way as he opened the next. It was wrapped in a cloth seemingly made out of gold, the ribbon binding it together a bright orange.

"My sister sent that one with me for you," Luna said. Inside the gold sheet was a replica of the Huntress Moon, the Frigate he had been stationed on for the past five years. "It works too, except for the folded space capabilities. It is a complete scale replica, also. It can fly, preform maneuvers, and if you put beads into it you can attack your friends with them. Tell it to do something." Kim looked up from the gift, a look of worry on his face.

"Are you sure it's an exact copy?" he asked, getting a nod. Kim frowned staring at the tiny ship. "UNSC transponder deactivation code sierra-three-five-eight-seven-oscar-charlie-niner-delta-whiskey-five. Confirm deactivation with flare." The ship sat motionless for a moment, a red flare launching out of the top of the aft compartments. Kim sighed, leaning back in his seat and staring at the ceiling for a moment. "That was close." Luna gave him a strange look.

"What was that?" She asked, stroking the handle on her mug with a finger. Kim motioned into space.

"An exact copy means that it puts out a subspace signal to any UNSC ships," Kim explained. "While this isn't necessarily a bad thing, the Covenant can also pick up the signal and track it much faster than the UNSC." Luna's eyes widened at the thought. "I see you understand." She nodded, watching him feed kernels of dried corn in the loading bay of the frigate. "Acquire target, dark blue, bipedal, female. Five o'clock." The small ship fired its thrusters, climbing up to the roof of the tent and zip around the room. He smiled at the sight, the first one Luna had seen since his arrival.

The next gift was from Daring Do. It was in a sack that looked like it had gone through a shit hammer. A plant matter rope bound it shut. "Typical Daring Do fashion," Luna said with a hint of amusement. Kim opened it and pulled the bag away from the contents. Inside was what looked to be like the remains a satellite from the early twentieth century.

"I wonder where she found this," Kim said, finding a small note stuck to the metal. "Dear Kim. I believe this artifact is not part of a lost civilization, but in fact a lost artifact of your civilization. While intriguing, I must give it back. Affection, Daring Do" Kim folded the note up, closing the bag back around the satellite. "Well now I know what happened to that lost probe earth sent out to look for life." Kim took a drink from his mug, Luna floating them both

over plates piled high with food.

"Don't think you're done," She said, reaching into her shoulder bag and pulling out a fist sized package as Kim pulled a leg from a whole roast chicken. It was wrapped in a shining silver cloth, tied at the top with a black ribbon. "I made you this for the celebration, as an official welcome and a token of friendship." She handed over the gift, beginning to eat her food as he opened the gift.

Kim nearly fell over from the sight of the object inside. Hovering over the cloth was a perfect copy of Harvest. The blue and green orb floated in the air about an inch over the table, rotating slowly as Kim took in the detail. The model world seemed real, the surface having miniscule trees and cities, farms and ranches dotting the grasslands. "It's an exact copy of a world I observed several years ago in the astronomy tower." Kim looked closer. The farms were filled with small moving objects, revealed as cattle and livestock. The mountains moved as well, the mines' machinery tolling out its monotonous work. In an ocean, a large fish breached the surface before casting a small wake and disappearing again. "The only thing missing are apparently humans, but if you would, I can fix that." Kim looked away from the miniature planet, Luna's hand held out to him. "If you will let me read your mind, I could place humans there." Kim nodded, returning his gaze to the orb. Luna took his hand, beginning to work her way into his mind gently. She quickly found what she was looking for, just the right heartstring to pull.

Luna's horn began to glow as she worked her magic on the artificial world, the surface outside of a city shimmering slightly. Kim watched as six humans took shape. Kim watched them as they moved around the farm, tending to the crops and animals as they had for the first twelve years of his life. It was a cruel reprieve, what Luna had created, but Kim didn't care. Even if it was a ghost of its former self, he now had his family back. "Mom, Dad!" Kim managed to choke past his rising heart. The two named humans looked up at him, their faces clearly detailed to his enhanced vision. They smiled and waved at him, causing a single tear to fall from the hardened soldier's cheek.

Kim looked up at Luna as she finished muttering the spell. He pulled her towards him, embracing her tightly and whispering thanks. The sudden action startled her, but she quickly recovered. She smiled and returned the hug. "I doubt I've ever seen anyone appreciate a gift that much," She said as he let her go. "Nor have I seen a soldier give that strong of a reaction to anything." She commented, cupping his cheek and wiping away a tear with her thumb. Kim stood still as she did; mentally trying to rebuild the barriers he had set up during the breaking session the UNSC had put him through.

"I shouldn't have," Kim said, reaching up to take her hand away. "I had put Harvest behind me; by several light years in fact." He grasped her wrist lightly, pulling her hand away from his face and releasing her momentarily. Luna stared him in the eyes, taking his hand again as he let her go.

"Come with me," She said quietly, pulling him away from the crowd and towards the tent flap. Kim grabbed their mugs before he was swept away from the table, the miniscule Harvest tucked safely away in the inside pocket of his jacket. Luna threw the flap open, looking around the area outside. There were no ponies within sight; her abilities of

the night letting her know that they were indeed alone save for a single being on the porch of Kim's house. She motioned him on with a twitch of her head, pulling him along with surprising strength away from the building and tent. They passed by the pit where the fire had been, the coals that remained smoking in the dirt. She continued to lead him into the empty ground, taking him toward a low hill that Kim had scouted for a fortification. The two jumped down the opposite side of the rise, landing at the bottom of the small ledge in a puff of dust. Luna released him at that moment, sitting down quickly and leaning back against the rocks behind her. "They're beautiful, aren't they?" She asked, Kim giving her a questioning glance. She pointed to the sky with her hand, pulling him down to the ground gently. Kim sat down, handing her a cup as he sat on the grass. The sky was filled with more stars than Kim thought could be seen anywhere he had been before.

"I doubt I've ever seen so many from the ground before," He said quietly. Luna chuckled to herself, staring at the sky with him.

"I try my hardest to give everypony the best view," She said, a hint of pride in her voice. "I sometimes spend weeks in the astronomy tower, just so I can find stars to reveal to the rest of the world." Kim leaned back onto the ledge, noticing how large the moon was. Luna took a gulp of her mead, the drink burning as it fell down her throat. She watched Kim as he relaxed, noticing that he no longer held himself as defensively as he usually did. "Would you like to see a trick?" She asked, getting a nod. Luna mouthed a spell she had created, the words flowing from her tongue with practiced ease as her horn began to glow. Some of the stars began to shine brighter, faint lines connecting them as the spell progressed. The constellations continued to fill the sky, Kim watching in amazement as the magic worked in the sky.

"That is astounding," He said slowly, taking a sip of his drink. A couple of the designs separated from their stars, moving across the sky as if of their own will. A bull walked through the stellar pastures, grazing on an image of grass. A pony hunter, the constellation Orion to Kim, stalked after the form of a deer, his bow raised and poised to fire. Luna and Kim sat there for a few hours, amusing themselves with her magic.

"_Commander, Come in,_" Thom's voice called over the clip radio Kim had attached to his jacket. He pressed the button, pulling it closer to his lips.

"What is it Thom?" He asked, a hint of aggression entering his voice. "I'm a little busy." Luna tapped him on the shoulder as two jesters preformed a humorous act in the sky to a monarch. They laughed together as the animations continued on their own.

"_I think I had too much to drink,_" Thom replied. "_The damned stars are doing shit._" Luna stifled a laugh at the human's confusion, Kim shaking his head before replying.

"Hit the rack, Noble," Kim said. "You've earned it, report to my quarters at ten-hundred hours tomorrow." There were two chirps and a click as the order was confirmed. Kim laughed quietly with the princess, watching the magical play fade away. "So you can do all of that with magic?" He asked, setting his empty mug aside. Luna sighed and nodded tiredly.

"Yeah," She said, yawning afterwards. "But it takes a lot of energy." She rolled over, laying her head on Kim's chest. "It's a good thing Tia took my duties up for the night," She said, draping her right wing over her body and propping the left one under Kim's back. "I doubt I could have made it to the castle tonight." Kim laughed quietly, looking up further at the stars. "You wouldn't mind if I stayed here tonight, would you?" She asked, looking up into his face as she gained his attention.

"I don't mind," He said, fishing the small orb out of his pocket and holding it in his palm. The globe floated in his palm, the cities lit up just as he had remembered them. "It's the least I can do, considering this." He removed his attentions from the planet in his hand, looking back at the princess that was falling asleep on him. "But wouldn't you prefer to sleep in a bed instead on the ground?" Luna shook her head lightly, only half conscious.

"No, here is fine," She said drowsily, wrapping her arms around him and covering him with her wing also. "It's common for the party focus to turn in early anyway from the ritual. Justâ€¦" She hesitated, fighting her tired brain for words. "Don't tell Tia I slept outside. She would throw a fit if she found out I wasn't under guard while I slept." Luna opened her eyes slightly as a metallic click entered her ears. Kim held a M6 pistol in his left hand. Luna laughed once in her chest, nuzzling Kim on the chest slightly. "Thank you," She said, finally falling asleep. Kim placed his right hand on her shoulder, watching the night. His vision continued to be drawn to Luna over the next hour, each time he looked at the moon his mind would force his eyes to her sleeping form. He felt strange, as if a fire had been lit inside of him and the alien being under his guard held more importance than life itself.

****Sup y'all! I'm back.****

****Did ya miss me? Anyway, this new job is kicking my flank hard; also having to sleep away the whole day after I get home doesn't help. Sorry it took so long also, no interwebs at the house -.-****

****I would like to personally thank all of your readers who have let me use your OC's. I would prefer to keep all the canon characters I can out of the majority of the story. It is thanks to all of you that I can make original Fan Fictions.****

****On the note of OC's in this story, if you have a character that you have pony-tized or just a pony that you wouldn't mind me altering to fit the bill (Anthromorphed, not furry -.-) then please send me a request in a PM. Please include a personality description and all physical features. (If said character is an Alicorn, it better be a damned sensible one)****

****CREDITS:****

****Mat and Sapphire are property of and used with permission from Bahamut Crisis Core.****

6. Family Ties

Kim was awakened from his dream, his reflexes telling him to fight.

He raised his M6 handgun over his head and above the lip of the ledge behind him, his neural lace connecting with the smart linked scope. The crosshairs filled his vision, his pupils glowing faintly as the implants activated. He turned the weapon to the sides, scanning the area. Although his senses told him something was wrong, he could find no danger. He deactivated the scope, lowering his weapon and sighing quietly before having a realization.

Ever since his augmentations, he hadn't dreamed. The dream itself woke him. He stared at the horizon, finding the sun on the rise as he contemplated why. He had become so accustomed to a lack of dreaming that it was an oddity, a curiosity to have one. And the subject of the vision was even more interesting. In the dream he had been on Harvest during the fight, fully augmented and holed up in his parents' farm house. The Covenant had made their way into the building, attempting to get at the "Demon" locked inside of the upstairs bedroom. There was something he had to keep safe, something so valuable to the war that he was ordered to die protecting it if need be. But for all the logic in his mind, not a single human name came to him.

Luna moved in her sleep, drawing Kim from his thoughts. Her hand had twitched, the Alicorn drawing her arm closer to herself. The night monarch lifted her head from Kim's chest and rubbed her eyes with a hand, stretching her left wing toward the sky and yawning lightly. "Good morning," Kim said, causing Luna to start.

"Oh! Kim, when did you get here," She said quickly, seeming surprised by his presence. "And, why am I on top of you?" She questioned further, blushing slightly in her embarrassment. Kim raised the pistol into view.

"You brought me out here, used a lot of magic and then asked me to watch over you while you rested." He explained before holstering his sidearm in the small of his back. "It seems that your nap turned into a full night's sleep." Kim rose forward as she tugged on her left wing, releasing her from her self-induced predicament. Luna stood up, dusting her clothes off.

"Did weâ€¦" She began to ask before Kim finished her statement with a shake of his head. She sighed, but with disappointment or relief Kim couldn't tell. "Ok, at least that makes my explanation to Tia a little less awkward." She looked at the sun, noticing it was nearing its zenith in the sky. "All the condemnations in Tartarus," She swore, catching Kim off guard with the eloquence of Equestrian cursing. "It's nearly high noon. The first batch of trainees for your school is already at your house." She reached out, grasping him on the shoulder. Kim had a second to prepare himself before he was enveloped in darkness. His sense of balance and direction, unlike the teleportation he had performed with Twilight, remained unaffected, him and Luna arriving in his bedroom a moment later.

She held onto his shoulder for a moment, making sure he wouldn't fall over before letting him go. "Thanks," Kim said as she released him.

"Don't mention it," She said, turning around and walking towards the door. She reached for the knob, stopping as the possible accusations that would arise if anypony saw her exiting Kim's personal quarters. "Actually, I think I will use the window," She said, turning around.

She stopped, a deep red blush painting her face as she witnessed Kim in the nude. She stood there in shock as he redressed in his armor, the vacuum sealed under-suit being placed on first. Kim glanced over at her.

"Are you alright?" He asked, bringing her out of her thoughts of what she had just seen. She cleared her throat, nodding quickly before trying to speak. She opened her mouth, her tongue failing her twice before she said something intelligible.

"I have never seen something that big on anypony before," She said, blushing as the mental slip was caught. Kim grinned, laughing at her.

"I'll be," he said. "Freud was right after all." He chuckled to himself as he zipped up the front of the suit, Luna's blush deepening further. Kim picked up the front plate of his chest piece, motioning with his left hand to the back plate beside him. "Would you mind helping me out?" He asked. "Not many people have seen me naked. It's the least you could do considering that look on your face." Luna tried to comment further, but decided against it and simply nodded. Kim hooked the chest plate to the harness on his torso, letting the straps take the four hundred pound weight. Luna used her magic to levitate the armor-plate onto Kim's back, following his instructions on how to secure it into place. As Kim attached and fastened plates to his arms, Luna did likewise to his legs. With two beings on the task, donning the armor in full took only five minutes.

"Thank you again," Kim said as he let the magnetic plates on his thigh take the M6 pistol. Luna levitated his helmet from the hat rack it was hooked on, placing it in his elbow before moving to the mirror in the wall.

"Don't mention it," she said, picking up a brush and embedding a spell in it. She ran the item through her astral mane, straightening the flowing strands from their disheveled state. "Really, don't mention it to anypony. The less the public know about my relations with an alien warrior the better." Kim had to agree, her disappearing with him last night and showing up the next day exiting his bedroom would look a little suspicious.

"Yes Ma'am," He said, saluting her quickly before moving to the door. He turned the knob, pulling the door in. As the door opened Kim was struck in the forehead by a set of knuckles, Thom's breath catching as he realized his mistake.

"Sorry," Thom said as Kim cast him an angry glare. "I slept in and forgot your orders sir." Kim shook his head and pushed past the armored and hung-over comrade. "The first platoon of recruits are here waiting, Commander. I have them rank and file in the front lot." Kim nodded.

"What are the ratios?" he asked, waving Luna ahead of them as she came out of his room. Thom glanced at Kim, the princess and then Kim's bedroom door; confused and slightly proud of his CO. "Lieutenant," Kim snapped, getting his full attention again. "How many unicorns, Pegasi and earth-ponies are there in this cycle?"

"Equal amounts, sir. Eight of each," Thom answered. "The ground

pounders are all fit formed and sturdy enough, but I'm not so sure about the others. They seem too frail for any real combat other than support roles." Thom handed him a clipboard stacked with medical reports; weight, height, names, blood types and all the usual information taken from a preliminary military physical. Kim scanned over the papers, thinking up the first days training regimen. The files had attachments describing experience, campaigns and proficiencies. The firearm training was mediocre at best, but seeing as how most of their weapons that were anything other than flintlocks required magic to work was understandable.

"Let's go say hello," Kim said, laying the clipboard on a chair and walking out the door. Kim stopped on the porch, staring at the empty space where the ponies were supposed to be lined up at. He sighed through his nose, looking at Thom for an explanation. The Spartan shrugged, clueless as to where they had gone. "Princess," Kim said dryly as she came up beside him. "Prepare to see how humans get things done." She raised her eyebrow as he scanned the area, pointing to a clump of trees with relaxed and armored ponies laying in the shade below. Kim drew his sidearm, activating the scope and aiming at the base of a branch a Pegasus was seated on. He squeezed the trigger, the blast echoing across the fields and frightening the group into cover. The branch Kim had aimed at splintered around the bullet, the explosive head maiming the tree. The pegasus fell from her perch, yelling and falling to the ground.

"What the hell do you think you are doing?" Kim yelled at the ponies as they peaked from their hiding places. "The Lieutenant gave you orders to stand in formation! I better see some fucking stiff stances right now!" The ponies stared at him dumbly, Kim huffing again before firing behind them. The rounds popped as they exploded in the dirt, scaring the ponies out of their cover. "That's better," Kim said as he reloaded the firearm. The recruits were very green, save for the unicorns that had been at the huntress moon segment since they had discovered it. The ponies had all formed up as Thom had told them before, three deep and eight wide. The unicorns were in the center, flanked at the rear by Pegasi and led by earth-ponies. "I have no idea what kind of training you lot have gone through already," Kim said, holstering his sidearm and stepping off the porch. "But I can guarantee you that I don't give a fat, flying rat's ass. The enemy you are about to be trained to fight is more vicious and determined than the worst thing you have on this moldy stone, and I will be damned if this place is destroyed because you green meanies think you're hard already." Kim walked down the line of recruits, noticing their garments. The earth-ponies had scaled armor on of either gold or black color. Their clothes were all complementary to the armor, blue and silver underlying the gold and black and either a long sword or broadsword strapped to their hips. The unicorns wore robes with chain mail sewn to the inside and out, daggers and flintlock pistols at their waists. The Pegasi wore tight fitting clothing, their armor consisting of light leather plating and very little metal and a bow and quiver over their shoulders. Kim stopped in front of a male pegasus, staring at the young soldier. The kid had on a leader's helmet, the red frill atop signaling him the commander of his platoon.

"What's your rank?" Kim asked, flicking a strand of loose horse hair. The male responded louder than necessary.

"Corporal Breeze, Sir!" Kim flinched inwardly as the boy's voice

pierced his enhanced hearing. Kim pushed the helmet back with a finger, letting it fall into the ponies face.

"You are less than dirt, son," Kim said as Breeze lifted the helmet back into place. "From this moment on you are now a buck-private. You will not hold any rank other than what I assign you, and you will only achieve advancement by impressing me with a bloodlust that few have ever seen! Do I make myself clear?" His low whisper had steadily grown into a full scream, the pegasus trying his hardest to stand in place under Kim verbal onslaught.

"Sir, I was appointed this position by princess Celestia herself!" Kim slapped the pegasus across the head, knocking him back and out of formation. The golden helmet rolled across the ground, the soldier leaning up on his elbow as the world began to become still again. Kim picked up the helmet, turning it over in his hands.

"I don't know what you were told by Celestia, Dirt," Kim said, crushing the helmet between his hands like an aluminum can. "But when you signed that form for transfer you relinquished all title and rank! I don't give a damn what anything tells you, because from this point on you will only have what I say you can have! You will not eat, sleep, talk or take a shit unless I say so!" Kim tossed the flattened helmet onto the ground next to the recruit. "Get your ass up and back into formation." He ordered before he returned to the front of the block.

"That goes for all of you," He continued. "You do what I say, when I say it. Celestia and Luna may rule this land, but until I say you are relieved of duty you will not take any orders other than mine. I don't care if the princesses order you to nail them like a messiah martyr; you will follow the chain of command through me! And only if I say you can will you fuck them like a five bit whore!" Kim looked back a row into the formation, seeing a pony scratching his head. Kim threw his helmet at the unicorn, catching him in the chest hard enough to send him back into the pegasus behind. "You do not move in formation unless I have ordered you to march!" Kim walked into the formation again, picking up his helmet and putting it on his head. "Lieutenant," He called, Thom snapping to attention. "I want them doing grass drills and running until they vomit up their first drink of mother's milk." Thom saluted, slamming his helmet down over his head and ordering the formation further.

"Alright, you heard the Commander!" Thom called out, taking up position next to the center of the formation. "First on your left, march!" The ponies stepped off on their left foot collectively, Thom giving a cadence to keep time to. Kim turned around, nodding to Luna.

"Any objections to my methods?" he asked. Luna raised both of her eyebrows once, fishing around in her pocket for a moment before presenting five golden bits. "Funny," Kim said, walking past her and into the house. Luna followed him in, taking a seat in the armchair beside his desk.

"I don't think I would have been so vulgar," She commented as he dropped the files on his desk. "But I suspect the process is to break them and then rebuild them." Kim nodded, letting his helmet photograph the files as he thumbed through them. "Cruel, unusual," she said, listing off the ways it was wrong.

"Harsh, demeaning, low and dirty, yes," Baldur finished, projecting himself over a terminal salvaged from the vehicular bay of the Huntress Moon. "But for all the flaws, you highness, it is the most effective way to train defenders against the Covenant. The enemy you face will not give quarter, no matter how peaceful your ways are." Luna looked at the hologram.

"Well if this is the way you train defenders, I would hate to see how you treat an attack force." Kim let out a bark of humorless laughter, drawing the attention of both beings.

"The same way, more or less," He clarified, taking off his helmet and setting it on the desk. "Except they kidnap them at the age of eleven, take them to a planet they have never been to and break their will. Then they build them up from nothing, teach them everything possible, train them to be able to kill something four times their size with their bare hands, augment them with stronger bones, denser muscles, heightened vision and hearing, the ability to run for fifty miles, give them an armor suit that can throw a ship a hundred feet and let them loose with a gun." Kim looked around the room quickly after finishing his soliloquy, "We're missing someone," He said, noticing Sapphire was absent.

"I gave her the day off from watching you before the party," Luna informed. "She said something about wanting to spend today with her brother, to catch up." Kim shook his head, picking his helmet up and walking to the door.

"Would you like a ride into town?" He asked, holding the door open. Luna thought on the subject for a moment, standing after a quick decision. Kim led them out of the building, walking along the dirt path that had begun to form from constant trips to the vehicle depot. He stopped on a rise, watching as Thom stopped the ponies after completing a five kilometer run around the property. The Spartan ordered them out of earshot, the ponies forming up and dropping to the ground to do push-ups.

Kim looked to his right as Luna arrived next to him, continuing along the path to the depot. In the ramshackle garage was an impressive fleet of trucks, ATV's and a solitary tank. There was a dismembered Pelican drop-ship against the far wall and a Falcon fast insertion aircraft in the center. "What are we going in," Luna asked as Kim walked to the left of the door. He stopped in the center of the wall, opening a caged cabinet and handing Luna two rifles. The Alicorn held the MA3B and XBR-55 in her hands as Kim withdrew a DMR with an upgraded scope and two M7 sub-machineguns. He turned around, scanning the fleet for a moment before pointing to a standard Warthog.

"My least favorite," The Hog had a LAAG rotary machinegun on the back, the belts and spare ammo canisters around it in the bed of the vehicle. He walked down the line of vehicles, lifting the cage door he had installed on the vehicle to let Luna into the passenger seat. She climbed in, hopping slightly to get over the berm to the seat. Kim closed the door, walking around the front and taking the weapons from her.

"If you dislike it so much, why use it?" She asked as he clasped the rifles into harnesses in the rear. Kim shrugged, placing the rifles attached to his back on the opposite side.

"Even though I don't like it," He said as he raised the driver side cage door, climbing in and pulling the skeletal type frame down. He fastened the door in place with the slap of a bolt, wedging his helmet into place between the seats. "It has the best options for the situation. It seats three, has a turret for defense if necessary, and can take almost anything a pony can throw at it." He reached around the wheel, pushing the button start. The engine roared to life, idling down to a deep purr. "And it can push its way through a tree if I need to. The tank would cause alarm if I drove it into town, and Thom is planning on teaching the recruits on how to properly ride the tread skirts tonight." He looked to his left as he flipped a switch on the dash, the large front doors of the garage sliding open. "Please remain seated throughout the entire process, Ma'am."

Sapphire sat in the balcony of the Baltimore Symphony hall, applauding the finished performance with the other two thousand ponies as the curtains closed over the stage. She had taken the train to the city, intent on having a reasonable conversation with her brother after his show. As the ponies below rose to leave she filed out of the balcony, flashing a security guard her Royal Regular Army badge as she made her way to the stage doors. She had completed the process several times before, flexing her muscle at each event she attended to get at her damned brother. Mat had a way with ponies that not many had, being able to keep to himself no matter how much somepony else wanted at him. The guard stopped her, shaking his head.

"I'm sorry Captain, but Master Shield's request stands this time." The black unicorn's voice was booming, echoing across the corridor even at a whisper. Sapphire sighed, stowing her badge in a pocket.

"Do we have to go through this again, Shadow Light?" She asked the guard, her voice firm and authoritative. "Let me through to my brother, or I will have your job. You do remember that I control your standing in this city, as well as all other Equestrian towns with a whim of my lips." The guard sighed this time, pinching the bridge of his nose between his thumb and forefinger before stepping aside just far enough for her to squeeze through.

Sapphire opened the door behind the guard, being met with boisterous conversation and revelry from the successful performance. Several instrumentalists turned towards her, handing her cups of wine or rolled tobacco sticks. She turned each down, sending them on their way with diminishing patience. She wove her way through the crowd of ponies in suits and gowns, finding her brother seated on a semi-circular sofa; two mares under his arms. "There you are," She said, walking up to the small coffee table before the couch.

"I am going to kill Shadow," Mat said, his eyes flashing to red before quickly returning to their natural blue. He released the mares, sending them away before picking up his glass of red wine. "To what do I owe this wonderful and unexpected, visit?" He asked, taking a drink as Sapphire rolled her eyes.

"You didn't stick around at the party," She said, crossing her arms. Her mechanical right arm creaked quietly as it moved; the gears and flywheels whirring silently. "You know I don't have many days off,

and when I do I like some family time." Mat scoffed into his glass, smiling slightly before taking another sip. "So how have you been?" She asked, trying to sound casual.

"The same as I always have been," He replied, waving a hand in the air. "Fame, fortune and fine fillies; the life of a renown violinist is never dull." He set the now empty glass on the coffee table, moving to the side and offering his sister a seat. Sapphire obliged him, taking up position at the opposite end of the leather bound sofa. "Is the old family tradition still as exciting as father tried to make it out to be?"

"More than you can imagine," She replied, her voice heavy with hostility. "It's a shame you had to go and waste the soldier's physique you inherited on frivolous travel and boring society. Tell me again how many illegitimate foals you've sired?" Mat hid his anger well, his eyes failing to betray him even.

"And how many ponies and griffons have you killed again?" He shot back, continuing their game of knives. "Your eyes appear less and less like a civilized being's with each passing day; every second you spend in the presence of death you look more like a wild beast." Sapphire smirked, pushing the table with her mechanical leg. The oak planks struck Mat in the shin with force, causing him to wince as his eyes returned to their crimson glare.

"I do not pretend to be something I wasn't meant to be," Sapphire spat. "I know that my family line has been the protectors of the land for generations and I will be damned if I try to be a false heir to the Shield name. You may try to run and hide behind your wood and strings, but you know there is a greater calling for you." Mat laughed once, biting the end of the humorless outburst off quickly.

"Just because my father and sister are legal murderers does not mean that I must follow in their wake of destruction." Mat stood up, turning to walk away. "I suggest you return to your assignment, sister. Our talk is over. If you have anything more to say than petty insults and banter then say it, if not then leave before we are literally at blows." Sapphire stood up from her seat, turning to leave before Mat called out to her. "And Sapphire, I do hope you use protection. I would hate to be the uncle to some half breed ape child." Sapphire let her hair fall over her face, covering the blush that was forming on her cheeks as she stormed out of the room.

She slammed the door behind her, Shadow Light taking in a deep breath. She walked up beside him, tossing her hair out of her face. "Thank you for letting me through," she said calmly. Shadow squared his shoulders, expecting some form of punishment from Mat. "Our conversation was lovely as always," She continued, her voice laden with sarcasm. "But I should probably give him a reason to let you off easy." Sapphire swung her left fist wide, striking the six foot seven inch pony in the eye. Shadow landed on the floor with a thump, knocked unconscious by Sapphire's precise hit. "See you later, Shady," She said, cracking her knuckles as she walked down the hall.

Kim rolled to a stop at the urging of Princess Luna, The Symphony hall a block and a half away from the intersection of Baltimore Main Street. Kim parked on the corner, rolling up to the sidewalk and

pulling the hand brake. She turned to look at him, noticing the strange looks they were getting. Kim hadn't put on his helmet for the entire trip, Luna noticing the eighth-of-an-inch stubble that now coated his lower jaw and upper lip. "You're growing a beard," She said, slightly distracted. "It looks good," She complemented as he felt his chin. "Anyway, Sapphire and her brother tend to talk rather... heatedly. You may want to wait for her to exit and then follow her until she's ready to come to you." Kim nodded, pushing the button start to cease the engines rumbling. He sighed quietly, leaning back in the seat. Luna followed his example, propping her feet on the dashboard in a rather un-royal fashion.

They proceeded to wait for the blue mare, waving and talking sparsely to ponies that dared approach them. Kim noticed they were rather apprehensive of him, preferring to go to Luna instead. Over the hour, they were visited by families requesting aid from the princess on behalf of their farm, to which she promised to speak with the Council of Three. It seemed odd for him, everyone being afraid or put off by the sight of a Spartan. The usual treatment he would receive among humans was akin to a battlefield celebration, but then he remembered they weren't of the same mind set. Ponies preferred peace to war, and from the looks of the fliers around the street, they were rallying for a defense force to be trained out of the mass public. 'Great,' He thought. 'More Green Meanies with a rifle barrel shoved up their collective asses.'

The hours continued to tick by, Kim enjoying the music that escaped the soundproofed hall with his enhanced senses. He could almost feel the vibrations of the orchestra when the door flew open, a disheveled and angry blue pony striding out and across the street without hesitation. Three of the ponies' primitive automobiles skidded to a halt, the drivers laying on their horns or shouting profanities at her. She paid them no mind though, taking a left to the train station as she reached the other side. "That's our little hot head," Kim said, starting the hog again. Luna had left her seat, now leaning against the LAAG mounted in the back. Kim tapped the accelerator lightly, causing Luna to grip the handles, keeping close attention to how close they were to the firing mechanisms.

The two followed Sapphire for several blocks, giving her a block's distance of room. She would glance back at irregular intervals as they perused her passively. Kim simply leaned on the roll cage, steering the hog with one hand as he weaved around light traffic. Luna would wave and smile when she did, still leaning on her elbows on the shield of the rotary gun. Sapphire continued to march along the street, the cooling air of what could be considered September chilling her skin slightly. She pulled her coat closed, buttoning three buttons and stuffing her hands down in the pockets.

"So what should we do now," Kim asked from the driver's seat as he changed lanes again. "It looks like she's determined to walk back to Ponyville." Luna grappled with the turret, gripping the handles each time Kim took a turn through the moderate traffic.

"Trust me," Luna said, fighting gravity for balance. "I used to talk with her guards when she was targeted by griffin assassins once. She'll come to us, just give her time." Kim sighed, shifting his weight in the seat and gunning the throttle through a lighted intersection. Luna yelped, falling back into the bed of the Hog before sliding forward as Kim slammed the brakes. She hit her head on

the hard steel back of the pilot seat, clamping her hands down over the impact point. "Can you be a little careful?" She shouted in frustration, stopping as she looked over the cab.

In front of the jeep was Sapphire, her hands on her hips and staring Kim down with a force Luna had seen hardened veterans shrink from. "I think it's quite clear I want to be left alone," She said over the loud engine idle. "So why are you bucking following me?" Luna looked over at Kim, finding his shrugging and staring directly at her. His resolve was astounding, either that or his ignorance was complete to the situation.

"I need you," He said flatly, the ponies behind him laying on their horns. Kim glared back at them for a moment, turning around and raising a finger before pulling a cord next to his seat. The air horn on the Warthog blared at a high volume, the ponies behind him getting the message and letting up on their horns. Kim released the cord, motioning backward with his head. "Get in," He said. "We have things to do and I'm holding up traffic."

"Captain," The helmsman of the Forward unto Dawn cried out into the bridge. "I think we've found the Huntress Moon!" The whole of the Ops crew turned around, glancing at the displays before the helmsman. They quickly turned their attention to Captain Harris, a seasoned Veteran of the rebellion wars. Harris was a man of fifty two, his hair grey and his form built. Even under his plush position he hadn't let the ODS'T way of life fall behind.

"Well," he said. "Where are they?" The captain walked across the bridge of the Frigate, coming up behind the pilot and leaning on his seat.

"I'm not sure it's the Huntress at this moment, sir," The pilot specified. "But for exactly five minutes I received a distress beacon in this quadrant." The Lieutenant Junior Grade brought up a star map, revealing a seven planet system. Captain Harris observed the map, finding something about it odd. He viewed the display for several minutes before it struck him. The system was Geo-centric, every planet and the star orbited one blue and green planet the size of earth. "It was the same sequence used by the Huntress, but I can't be certain from this distance." Harris wasted no time.

"Are you certain it was a UNSC transponder signal?" The pilot nodded. "Then set a course for that system. If we got it, then the Covenant sure as hell already have a lock. Communications," An ensign with a yellow jumpsuit saluted him. "Send word back to the nearest colony to make an immediate jump for that system. Send coordinates and a request for all available ships. If the planet is deserted then we have a new colony."

"Admiral," The Minor Domo called into the bridge of the CCS Battle Cruiser. "I have a lock on a Heretic signal. What are your orders, sir?" A Major Domo in the central seat touched his mandibles with his hand, clicking them together quietly as he thought. The Sanghielli wore silver armor, his right eye-port on his helmet having a large gash in the brow; his testament to having survived a hand to hand fight with a dreaded Demon.

"The Prophets would have our heads if we ignored this," He said in a commanding tone. "Order all ships to jump on our mark. If this human

signal turns out to be another holy relic then I can predict a well deserved promotion for all of us." The crew began to mill about the bridge, preparing for a Slip Space jump.

****Good Morning Vietnam!****

****That's right, the UNSC has found their lost Spartans, but so has the Covenant. Shits about to go down, and an OC is about to come into their own as a major player. There may be three or four chapters until then but the big confrontations, romance triangles, family feuds, bad blood, intricate space battles (and their difficult mathematics) are about to come to play. ****

****As always, I want to thank you for sticking around this long on the story and making it one of my most viewed stories ever. The only stories more viewed are Humastria and My Little Zombies. That's right; my side project shall become a cornerstone in my repertoire of literary fame. (Even if it is only fandom viewsâ€¦) ****

****Here's to my friends who have pledged their OC's for this story.****

****Mat and Sapphire, a very frequent pair in my fan fictions of MLP, are property of and used with permission from Bahamut Crisis Core. Gods Bless brony, Gods bless.****

****To Timefather64â€¦ I would like to thank you for giving me the permission to use Black Dragon and Leoj in MLZ. Along with Little Strife, who shall be making an appearance in this fiction as well.****

****To Najee, for his character Blackfire. He will be used further in the story, bro. don't worry.****

****Again, Please Review :)****

7. Truth Within Lies

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"Fire," Thom barked from behind the recruits. The ponies fired in turn, each firing their rifle after the pony to their left. Kim stood by Thom, observing each one. Each round echoed back as it struck the target five hundred yards away, the capabilities of the Equestrian tech being put to the absolute limit of its range. "No magic Strife! How many times do I have to tell you?" Thom screamed at the unicorn.

"Sir, I can't hit the target from this distance without it sir," Strife argued, trying to convince the lieutenant. "The tech isn't sufficient sir."

"And if you continue to use up your energy faster than the enemy like that you will not be able to perform!" Thom clarified. "Aurum, bring them in." A golden skinned pony at the edge of the line nodded, muttering a spell before the steel plates began to near them. Thom walked up to the targets, grabbing one of the fifty pound plates and handling it like a sheet of paper. "Explain to me what the hell this

is Strife!" Thom screamed, the steel plate being unmarked.

"Permission to speak freely, sir," Strife asked. Thom nodded, Strife sighing. "My rifle is refuse sure. It couldn't hit the broadside of a barn." Thom took the bolt action rifle from Strife, throwing the target like a Frisbee. In three seconds he loaded the rifle with six rounds and shouldered the weapon, taking aim on the target as it arced across the sky. He waited until his tracking systems registered five hundred yards before pulling the trigger. The rounds resonated through the field as he pumped the bolt. In four seconds he had emptied the magazine, thrusting the empty weapon into the unicorn's hands and ordering Aurum to retrieve the target. The gold unicorn levitated the steel plate over to Thom, letting him take it again.

"The ability of the weapon is only limited by the proficiency of the wielder," Thom said as he showed the target to Strife. The steel plate had six holes in it, each one forming a circle an inch wide. "Your inability to fight is not my problem. My problem is to give you the skill set to fight an enemy that would rather burn your hide from space as soon as look in your general direction." Thom dropped the target and walked back away from the firing line again, Kim placing a hand on his shoulder before letting him pass.

"Cool Breeze, Summer Skies, Omniscient Thought and Green Ash," Kim called out, picking ponies that had exceeded in their training. "Front and center troops." Two Pegasi, Cool breeze and Summer Skies, dropped from their chosen firing positions before joining a unicorn, Omniscient thought, and the earth pony named Green ash. The four saluted, Kim returning the gesture before motioning with his hand. "Follow me," He said, turning around and walking down the path to the weapons duplication shed. Kim led them half way there before speaking. "I just got word from Celestia. She says there is some suspicious activity on the border of the Hassan Desert."

"That's zebra territory," Green Ash said, his accent sounding surprising close to Irish. Kim nodded, stopping before a dirt road as four Warthogs thundered by. Sapphire was in the lead vehicle, slamming the rear quarter panel of the truck into the nose of another that was creeping up on her.

"Come on!" Kim heard her scream over the engine before they passed. "You can do better than that! If you can't pass me after a month of this dung then you never will!" The warthogs roared out of sight over a hill, dust following them all the way.

"Yes," Kim acknowledged after the noise had passed from hearing, continuing on the way to the established Magazine. "And from what I know about the military actions in the past, this could turn into a long and bloody struggle if we can't stop any possible hostile intent from coming to fruition." Cool Breeze gave Kim an odd look, obviously confused.

"Sir, I fail to see what this has to do with us," Breeze said. "These types of things are usually looked into by the Psy-corps, not Regulars like us." Kim shook his head, disappointed in the Pegasus's skills in perception.

"What about a military force designated to defend against split

chinned aliens is regular?" He asked, Breeze nearly stumbling over his mistake. "Celestia wants us to go and check this out covertly; mostly because of the prejudice the unicorns have against the zebras. We find out what they're up to, report back, and await orders." Kim opened the door to the magazine as they arrived, walking in and turning on the lights. The shed was more of a tiny warehouse, the ceiling twenty feet over head and the walls over two hundred feet apart. "But first I have to outfit you all with armor."

Twenty minutes later the four ponies were dressed in dappled green suits of Titanium-A battle plate, complete with full face helmets. The suits covered all surfaces of their bodies, the ponies now resembling tall ODSs. The suits were light, the weight being overcome with mechanics. Kim walked around the magazine, picking out weapons he believed suited each pony and attaching silencers to them. "These suits," He narrated, continuing his work. "Have all the capabilities of an Orbital Drop Shock Trooper and more. They have an integrated interface that will tap into your Central Nervous System, allowing you to activate systems silently by thought. While your weapon is not being sighted you will be able to see where the rounds will go through a customizable reticule. All of your information; armor integrity, vitals, ammunition count and reserve, and squad information will be at your fingertips." Kim continued to list off the capabilities as he dispensed weapons to the troops.

"You have a helmet mounted light, clamps on the armor to secure up to four weapons, pocket space for up to ten magazines and eight grenades combined, a tactical map that will be updated by a Falcon overwatch and coms that can reach out to over two thousand miles on the prime conditions." Kim handed the final weapon to Green Ash, turning to the rest of them to already find them testing out the iron sights. "Any questions?" the assembled ponies shook their heads, Kim smirking. "Good. Baldur, go ahead and activate the wires." The four ponies all tensed up and groaned as micro filaments bore their way into the vertebrae of their necks, tapping into their reflexive transmitters.

"Greetings Fire-team Alpha," Baldur said, projecting over a holo-tank in the building. "I see all is well and you are about to go on your first mission as said group." Green Ash rolled his eyes behind the thin visor of the helmet. "I am going to inform you on what thoughts do what on your Mark Two Battle Suits. Please think of the word _map_." The four exclaimed as the visors on their helmets turned black.

"What in Blazesâ€¦" Omniscent said. Inside of the unicorns armor the visor was outlining the objects in the room in yellow, the integrated VISR system filling out its check list. The four inch tall by seven inch wide visor was now blackening to a blank screen, replacing the void with a map of Kim's training compound. The four ponies in the building, Kim, Thom, the Warthogs racing around the track they had dug and the Falcon that was flying overhead were highlighted with yellow in the three dimensional map.

"This is your tactical map," Baldur said. "It is up to par with Kim A587's custom ONI prototype. You navigate it by thinking forward or next, back or previous, and turn the map by thinking rotate and the direction you wish for. Or, for the more artisticâ€¦" Baldur stopped mid sentence as Summer Skies held out her hands, two cylinders rising out of the palms before glowing. "Very good Alpha Three," Baldur

complemented as the tac-map was projected before the Pegasus. "Just picture the map moving and you can look at anything with scrutiny, as long as said subject is in the eye of the Falcon." Summer Skies caused the map to grow out, encircling her before the camera view focused on Thom. The Spartan was yelling at the ponies as they performed grass drills. He turned around, casting a casual salute in the direction of the Falcon overhead before continuing to drill the recruits.

"Ya got a thing for the El Tee, Lass?" Green Ash asked with a hint of amusement, Summer Skies blushing inside her helmet before deactivating the projectors.

"Enough," Kim said, silencing the group. "Baldur, finish things up here. We need to get under way." The AI nodded in its projection, continuing to tutor the ponies on the suit specific properties for each one.

"Alright," Kim said over the com in the bay of the Falcon. "We all have our mission parameters, right?" The ponies nodded. "Once more just in case," Kim continued. "Ash is on me as marksman. Skies and Omniscient are team two; your objective is to get to the edge of the savanna near the desert. Don't get too close until you hear from us, we don't need you being spotted." The pegasus and the unicorn nodded. "Dirt," Kim said, bringing the last pony's attention to him. "You are to stay on the Falcon and provide air directions and technical info to us that we can't access." The male pegasus nodded, returning his attention to the end of the turret he was on.

"The drop points coming up commander," Thom called out on the channel. The Falcon began to descend to the ground, making a steep angle drop to the deck. The ponies in the bay cycled their weapons. Green Ash loaded his rifle with a magazine, pushing the bolt forward and down to load a round into the chamber. He adjusted the scope on the top, a version Kim had assembled based on his rifles scope. Summer Skies loaded her M7s with a clip, slapping the rectangle of caseless ammunition to the side and loosing the bolt with one action. Omniscient Thought loaded his XBR55, riding the bolt forward. Kim slapped him on the shoulder, shaking his head in silent scorn at the pony's misuse of equipment. "Touchdown," Thom yelled. "Second squad, move out!" Summer and Omniscient jumped out as the Falcon landed on the dirt, running into the thin forest as the Falcon lifted up and back.

Thom steered the aircraft around, lowering his altitude to skim along the tops of the Joshua trees below them. He made a left bank, turning forty degrees north toward the mountain cliff in the center of the dry wood. Kim looked out of the blood bay door to the east and south, finding something on the horizon. It was too far away to see clearly, but it seemed to be what Celestia wanted them to find. "Ash," Kim said, holding out his right hand. "Give me your rifle." The pony handed him the bolt action rifle, Kim shouldering it and staring down the sight. "Can't get a clear line of sight," He mumbled, activating the smart link in the weapon. Kim raised his head from the stock, the scope projecting the image in the sights inside of his eyes. There was a low structure, about two stories tall and fifty feet across. There were shadowed figures moving around the building, details still out of sight.

"Alright," Thom said, the Falcon making a rearing maneuver before

shaking from the impact with the steep angle of the mountain side. "Team one, go, go, go!" Kim shoved the weapon back into Ash's hands, jumping out of the Falcon's port side door, crouching and lying down in the tall grass before pulling a MA3B rifle from his back. He slapped the action loose, loading a round as Ash dropped to the ground on the opposite side. The Falcon took off, veering hard to the right before making a near vertical climb. "All teams departed," Thom said over the radio. "Good luck Commander, I'm starting the overwatch." The sounds of the twin rotors began to fade as the Falcon left the area, picking up speed and altitude. Kim lay in the grass watching the trees at the foot of the mountain for motion before keying his mic.

"Ash, on me," He ordered, the earth pony coming up next to him. "Come on, we gotta get out of the open and to the lookout point." Ash nodded, turning on his stomach and heading uphill to the edge of the low shrubbery. Kim followed the sniper, rising to a low crouch as he entered the three foot tall bushes.

"Hey, Skies," Omniscient said over the man to man radio channel. The pegasus twitched her wings, the titanium A plating clattering together as she did.

"Commander said radio silence, Brainiac," She replied, her silenced M7 raised before her as they stalked through the trees. She could see the edge of the tree line ahead, the sparse Acacia and Joshua trees opening up to the dry plains land beyond. "What's up?" Omniscient looked around, hurrying up her and crouching behind a small stand of low trees.

"I got a few stills from him earlier," he explained, opening a pocket and pulling out a Data-pad. It showed the building in the dunes. "These don't look like any Zebra structures I've ever seen." He handed the display to Skies, raising his battle rifle to take point watch as she looked them over. "This whole thing seems a little FUBAR to me, dontcha think?" Skies slid her finger across the screen, changing pictures. They were grainy and pixilated, but she had to concur.

"Maybe that's why the princesses wanted us to check it out," She replied, bring up her integrated map. She sent a request to the Falcon overhead, placing a ping over the target on the map for a high altitude pass for images. "I'm going to go ahead and get a few more from the El Tee. Come on, we gotta move out." The pair exited the trees, dropping to the ground and belly crawling towards their rally point.

"A high pass of the objective," Thom mused as he checked the altimeter on the Falcon. If Breeze wasn't wearing the suit he would have refused the request. Thom reached back and slammed his fist against the door. "Hey, we're going higher for a pass on a structure," He informed over the com line. "Reel em in and close the doors." The sounds of movement echoed into the cockpit as Breeze pulled the turrets in and slid the blood bay doors closed. Thom pulled back on the stick, rotating the propellers forward to speed their ascent. He watched the scale tick by on his visor, waiting for the ceiling to arrive. He hit ten thousand feet, leveling out quickly so as not to drop out of the sky.

"Where are they Ash," Kim asked as he crawled up behind the point

sniper. Ash motioned out over the cliff edge with his left hand.

"They've reached the halfway marker, sir," The pony informed. "The lass radioed in someth'n about a high altitude pass. She wants some clearer pictures would be me best guess." Kim nodded, pulling out a spotter's scope. He activated the smart link, setting the hand held device down on an auto turret. He looked around the area, the scope following his line of sight and projecting the image to his visor. He found the two ponies with little effort, following their nav-points to their position. "Sir, could ya get me a spot on the mobiles around the structure?" Kim tapped him on the free shoulder, looking over to the building from before.

"Remember, Green," Kim said, intensifying to magnification through the scope. "We aren't supposed to engage unless engaged." Ash unlocked the bolt, pushing it up and pulling it back half way to keep a twitch from sending a round down range. "I got one, but it's still grainy. And this damned heat shine isn't helping." Ash simply grunted in agreement. Heat Shimmers were a bitch to target through. "We have to wait on the pass to get anything definite. Or until team two gets close enough for visual description."

Skies and Omniscient crawled up the edge of the sand, using a low dune as a point of cover. "Brainiac," Skies said over the two-way. "Get up there and give me a scout. I can't see shit beyond this damn shimmer with my red dot." She patted him on the shoulder, Omniscient crawling up to the top of the five foot tall dune and laying the fore grip of his BR on the crest. He activated the smart scope, staying out of sight as much as possible.

"I can't see much from here," He said, moving the rifle to the left. "But this is definitely not a zebra building," Omniscient turned his rifle to the right, slowly panning before stopping suddenly. "How far over the border are we," He asked skies.

"Too far," She said, crawling up next to him. "Why?" Omniscient shrugged, pulling his rifle back before looking at her.

"Because I have a nomad about two hundred yards," he informed. Skies swore into her helmet, peeking over the edge quickly. "What are we gonna do?"

"Do nothing," Kim's said into his radio, having activated the encrypted channel between teams. "If you are seen the testy armistice that's there will be thrown out." He looked over at Ash.

"I have em sir," He said, reaching forward and screwing a silencer into the barrel of his rifle. "You want me to go ahead?" Kim thought on the option for a moment, weighing the possibilities for the nomad to miss them.

"If he hasn't changed course by fifty yards, take him out." Kim ordered, getting a nod before the pony returned his sight down range. "Team two, stay still. Get ready to hide the body somewhere if we have to take him down. I suggest placing him on a dune and collapsing it"

"Roger sir," Skies said, peeking over the edge again. The zebra herder hadn't changed course, now only a hundred and fifty yards

away. The target was about five-seven, clothed in a long white robe and had a shroud over his head and mane. He was leading a herd of camel like beasts behind them, the only notable difference were the four horns between their ears and the red colored coat. "What do you think Brainiac? Think he'll make a smart choice and get lost?" Omniscient smirked behind his face plate, chuckling to himself.

"Doubt it," He said, looking into the scope of his XBR55. "Damned Stripe Backs never make a smart decision in their lives." He watched as the Zebra continued to close, now only a hundred yards out. "Dammit," he swore, gripping the pistol grip of the rifle hard in frustration. "Come on, get out of here."

"He's not movin' away sir," Ash said as he adjusted his aim slightly to compensate for the new burst of wind. Kim centered his vision on the nomad herder, the scope following his movements and giving him a reading on distance.

"Pique his interest in another direction," Kim said, giving the pony a directive. Ash turned his rifle to the right slightly, squeezing the trigger. The silencer let out a puff of fog and a hiss as the round fired, the iron slug moving down range and imbedding it's self in the sand two hundred meters to the left of the Zebra. The herder looked in the direction of the sound as Ash fired another shot. This time the slug landed in the grass of the savanna, the thump of the impact followed quickly by another. The zebra pulled out a rifle, moving towards the sounds. "Team two, take him down but leave him alive. We only need him out of the way." Omniscient nodded in the distance, casting a spell to hide himself. His foot prints appeared where he was walking, arriving behind the zebra quickly. The target dropped his rifle, reaching up with both hands and grabbing at something around his neck before falling out of consciousness. Omniscient released the spell, dragging the limp being into the grass and laying him down. He coaxed the pack animal over, searching in the bags until he found a blanket, which he proceeded to cover the zebra with. "Good, get going," Kim ordered over the radio. "We have clear ground until the building." Kim watched as team two moved across the remaining grass and entered the sand of the desert fully. He crawled back from the edge, slapping Ash on the boot. "I'm going for a pick up," He said. "Keep an eye out for them." The pony nodded, ejecting his magazine and reloading it from a belt across his chest.

"Lieutenant," Breeze called out in the bay of the Falcon. He had been monitoring the data terminal in the aircraft, taking still shots of the building below them. "Commander wants a pick up at the base of the mountain. I'm finished with the stills, sending them to him now." Breeze gathered the pictures into a file, sending them all at once to Kim and team two.

"What the hellâ€¦" Kim said after looking over the images from the Falcon's pass. They showed a metal structure, around thirty feet tall and five hundred feet across. "This is definitely not supposed to be here," He said, looking up as the sounds of the Falcon approached. Kim stood and walked around the area as the Falcon landed, standing still beside the craft as the port door opened. Kim grabbed the support bar around the door, holding on to it as he sat on the edge of the bay. Kim held his MA3B rifle in his right left hand, banging the back of his helmet against the metal to let Thom know he had

boarded. Kim propped his foot on the gunner's seat as the Falcon began to take off, adjusting his hold on the rifle to better stabilize the weapon if he needed to fire. "I want you to circle up high; out of visible range until team two reaches the perimeter of the structure." Kim ordered.

"Roger," Thom replied, setting the Falcon into a hard right turn and increasing altitude. "Moving to five thousand feet, make sure your suits are five by five." The trip up took less than a minute before they began circling the area of operation. Kim kept an eye on the ground, making sure there weren't any zebras near the outside rim. Every so often he would check team two's progress, making sure they were on the ball. Each time they were considerably closer, taking into mind the size of the desert sector they were in. Kim tapped into their radios, silencing his microphone before he did.

"Give me something Ash," it was Skies. "I've got five hundred to go and the clock says we should have been there an hour ago."

"Yer clear for miles, lass. I suggest ya run it to the next cover point before something rides up yer flank."

"Dammit Skies," It was Omniscient. "Slow the hell down, you know I can't run as fast as you can fly." Kim looked out into the sand, seeing Skies flying only inches above the deck.

"Then teleport," She said. "If you had done that in the first place we could have been done already."

"Both of ya, shut yer damned mouths. The Commander's listening in." the radio went silent now, Kim smirking. "I doubt he would look too kindly on the two of ya bickering like both me ex-wives." Kim laughed at the comment, looking back again at team two. They were on the edge of the building area, lying on a dune that watched over the compacted ground. "Sir, they've reached the objective area. I'm going to use the Falcon's cameras to aim now."

"Roger," Kim said. "Thom, I'm jumping. I need you to buzzard for a while over the area while I'm gone." Kim stood up in the bay, shouldering his rifle and pointing the barrel away before jumping. Kim watched the dune below him grow closer by the second, controlling his pitch and rolling onto his back before striking the sand. The dune collapsed outward from the top, a small crater forming around him. Kim sat up, shaking the sand off his helmet before standing. He turned to his left, jumping down from the ten foot high remains of the hill of sand and sprinting towards team two's location.

"Down, now!" Ash yelled over the radio, a round zipping past Kim's head as he leapt forward and sprawled out. He landed on the ground as the round impacted something ten feet in front of him, red blood spraying out as a tan colored blanket lifted to reveal a Zebra half covered in sand. Kim rose to his hands and knees, crawling over to the dead target. In its hands, aimed where he had just been was a rifle. "Target eliminated," Ash said over the radio. Kim rifled through the zebra's belongings, finding a short wave radio. He lifted the device to his helmet, turning the volume dial up. The device was dead, its battery apparently having gone out a while ago. He covered the body with the blanket, piling some sand over it to hide it once more before making his way toward team two again. Kim sprinted the short distance, diving as something came around the corner of the

building and landing on the dune next to Skies.

"What's the situation here," Kim asked, pulling out another spotting scope and linking it with Ash's visor before setting it atop the small drift of sand. "I have eyes up close Alpha four, sync with your sights." Skies looked at him, bringing up the still she had just received from the Falcon.

"Take a look sir," she said, peeking over the crest as Kim took the data pad. "Whatever this is, it isn't Zebra tech." Kim flipped through the pictures before finding the new one. It showed a silver object, floating ten feet above the ground. It resembled a type of bird, but what kind I'm didn't know. "Have you ever seen anything like it," skies asked, returning her view to her commander. Kim shook his head, peeking over the crest as she had.

"Never," he stated flatly. "But if we can get past it we can complete the mission. Have you seen any others since you arrived?" Skies shook her head, as did Omniscient. "Then that makes the process of infiltrating the building easier. Alpha one," Omniscient nodded to Kim. "Stay here. I need you to watch for that thing. I'm almost certain the front has a camera mounted to it. Alpha two, on me," Kim surged forward as the floating chunk of metal rounded a corner, closing on the low fence structure that surrounded the building quickly. He dropped into a runners slide, catching his foot on the low metal wall and forcing his bulk into a kneeling position as Skies arrived. She crouched next to her leader, peeking over the edge of the wall before ducking back under cover. Kim reached around himself, counting his magazines and grenades before grabbing one from its pocket. It was an EMP emitter, the effective range being fifty feet. "I have an idea," he said, twisting the canister and causing it to activate and charge.

The metal sentry came around the corner again, Kim watching the scope he had set up from his visor for the right time. It turned the corner to make a broadside pass on the building. Kim looked over the edge of the wall, pressed the red button on top and threw the grenade. It landed behind the sentry, the device flashing before several arcs of electricity leapt from the canister. The sentry drone blinked out, falling to the ground with a loud crash before sliding to a stop. "Go," Kim ordered, mounting the wall and making a mad dash to the wall of the structure. Skies was right behind him, using the jet assisted suit to increase her speed. They ran past the dead drone, Kim grabbing her by the arm. Skies spread her wings and forced them down as he threw her over the wall, floating down to safety as she heard a clamorous sound below her. Kim's gauntlet gripped the edge of the building behind her, his helmet and shoulder pads coming into view as he hauled his ton weight over the wall and onto the roof. "I need to get some kind of jet assistance," he grunted as he sprawled out over the ceiling before standing up. "I forgot I can't jump that high." Kim looked around the area, trying to find a way in before something caught his eye. It was some kind of shaft, the door on the opening having a motion sensor. 'If it isn't Zebra, Pony or Covenant,' Kim thought, walking toward the shaft. 'Then what is it?' he waved his hand over the motion sensor, getting no response. "Give me something to cover it with," Kim ordered, getting a piece of paper in response. He laid the map over the black box, the door swinging out to open. "Go, I'll follow you," he said, skies following his instructions. She grabbed the top of the opening, sliding her legs in and folding her wings as close to her body as possible before letting

do and disappearing into the dark shaft. Kim followed her example, releasing his hand and falling into darkness as the door closed behind him. Kim fell for half a minute, landing hard on the ground in the darkness of the building's interior.

"Sir," skies said over their two-way channel. "was that you? The VISR isn't helping anything in here." Kim was about to reply before a bright blue orb of light appeared between them, illuminating the area around them to an extent.

"Greetings," the now distinguishable ball seemed to say. "I am Monitor 142, how can I be of service?" Kim looked past the ball, finding Skies to be focused on the object with her M7. "I can assure you that I mean you no harm. What brings you to my station?" Skies lowered her vision to Kim for a moment, looking for instruction. Kim held out his hand, motioning with his palm downward in a sweeping motion. Skies lowered her weapon, keeping the machinegun at the ready in case the situation changed. "How can I help you?" The ball questioned further, switching its view from Kim to Skies quickly. Kim stared at the object that spoke to them, realizing it was some sort of Artificial Intelligence.

"What is this place?" Kim asked, taking a look around as lights began to activate along the bottom on the walls. There were machines, of what purpose he couldn't fathom until something he recognized lit up. Kim rose from his slightly bowed stance, walking toward a line of seemingly ever expansive tubes. The tops were clear, presumably a type of glass, coated in a light ice frosting and foggy condensation. He stopped beside the first in a row, running his gloved hand across the glass to wipe away the frost and fog. Inside the tube was a human shaped form, small robotic creatures crawling over top of it. It wore a suit of grayish white armor, the helmet angular and slightly shaped like the face of a bird. The center of the helmet was dominated by an iridescent orange visor, similar to the visor to a SII while just above it some of the small robots worked to build something akin to a horn, coating the protrusion with more of the suit material an inch from the point of progress. "What is going on here," Kim mused quietly as he watched the fog and frost recoat the glass.

"This is reclamation station 4 of shield system 00," the monitor said, floating up and stopping beside and above Kim. "These are the last of the Forerunner, human." The mention of the name sent chills down Kim's spine, the hardened veteran visibly shaking as the monitor said the word. "There are two of them walking the surface of this installation now, though one believes herself to be one of the evolved surface races." The monitor moved in a manner that bespoke thought, turning momentarily back to Kim. "She calls herself Luna." Kim shook his head slowly, returning the rifle stock he held to his shoulder. "Is something wrong Reclaimer?" the monitor asked as Kim turned, swirling the air with a hand at skies to signal a rally.

"Show me the exit," Kim ordered the monitor. "I have to speak with _Celestiaâ€|_" he let as much anger and frustration he could muster creep into the word, following the ball as it moved away. "Thom," Kim called on the radio. "Gather the rest of the team, I'll be out soon."

The Falcon whined down as Thom flipped switches on the control panel, deactivating the blades as the passengers he was carrying exited into

the garden square of the palace. He watched from the cockpit as Kim gave orders to the ponies, each one taking up position around the bird as he marched toward the double front doors. "Something's pissed him off," Thom mused aloud, opening a pocket on his armor and pulling out an MRE pastry. "I hope he knows what he's doing," he said with finality as he removed his helmet, tearing open the paper wrapping and biting into the apparent strudel. He raised his eyebrows, glad he had grabbed the right one.

Kim was let into the castle by two guards, the earth ponies directing him to the throne room. He walked quickly down the massive halls, fuming his frustration at not being told upfront about the situation. He turned down another hall, the shortcut the guards had given him proving fruitful. Before him stood the twenty foot tall double doors to the throne room; their golden accents casting reflected light about the area. He walked forward, the two earth guards stopping him. "I'm sorry sir but you are not permitted to enter," the right guard said after stepping before him. "The princesses are in a meeting with the council of three. No pony is allowed access at this time." Kim shook his head, pushing past the guards. "Sir, I must advise you—" the guard stopped mid sentence as Kim grabbed the two silver chains attached to the door, pulling on them and moving the ten ton doors out. Kim gave the doors another yank, the massive bulk moving with ease as he let the chains fall.

Celestia sat in her throne, listening to the bickering of the tribe leaders before her. Halfway into their discussion they began arguing over petty matters, not having stopped yet. She took a drink of the wine in her hand, tuning out their arguing until one called her name. "Celestia, I plea you," the pegasus captain begged. "Grant the Pegasi under my wing more space for expansion. Cloudsdale is over populated and they require space for residential building." Celestia nodded slowly, waving a hand.

"It is done," she said, the unicorn leader and earth pony governor staring at her with an agape expression. "You have fifteen miles more on your allotted airspace at your disposal." The pegasus captain bowed, his armor clinking lightly as he honored her decision with much glee.

"Milady I must object to your choice," the unicorn aristocrat argued, the pegasus glaring at him from his bowed stance. "If you go through with this despot's suggestion my ponies will be forced to move elsewhere to grow what crops we can in the cliffs." The earth pony governor stepped forward, shoving the unicorn on the shoulder.

"You uptight, spiky browed magicians couldn't grow a crop if you tried," she said, striking an aggressive posture. "That's why you beg more than half our harvest each year and sell it to the Pegasi for gems. If you stored your food like we do you would have more than enough." The mare turned to the princess. "Your highness please, I have no objection to your expansion choice, but if you would have them build away from the fields. Last year's crop was lame and slight, and we also require more land." The unicorn scoffed, throwing his hands up.

"And run up on our mines," he yelled, pointing his horn downward, making a gesture to gore the mare. "I think not. You would half our profits just so you can grow fatter!" the mare drew the long sword at her waist, pointing it hostilely until the doors let out a sound of

screaming metal. Celestia turned her attention to the possible threat as the doors opened from outside, standing and readying a spell of solar fire. The doors revealed Kim as he dropped the chains, two earth guards stumbling after him as he strode into the room.

"What is this madness!" the pegasus demanded, drawing the broadsword slung across his back as Kim continued his march. "You interrupt our business! I should cleave you in triplet for your arrogance. Leave at once!" Kim turned his head toward the captain, staring him down as he continued ahead. "I said halt!" the pegasus screamed, stepping in front of him and raising his blade. Kim continued to the captain's dismay, the pegasus steeling himself and bringing the blade down toward Kim's collar. Kim grabbed the blade, tearing it from the pegasus' hands and snapping it in half.

"This meeting is adjourned," Kim announced, handing the pegasus back his broken sword. "Get out." He growled, standing inches away from the captain. The pegasus faltered under Kim's stare, stumbling around him and fleeing the throne room with the other leaders. Kim looked at Celestia, watching her as she waved all her guards out of the room. He waited until the doors were sealed, a locking beam being placed over the outside rungs. "Why didn't you tell me," Kim asked, his calm voice betraying his anger. "You could have saved me a lot of time and trouble by telling me what you wanted checked on." Celestia sighed, walking to the back of the room and opening the door that lead to her sister's chambers. Luna fell forward onto the ground, having been listening through the door. She motioned for her to take her place at her violet and silver throne, returning to her own seat as Luna did so. Kim stood still, crossing his arms as he waited for an answer.

"Is it so hard to believe that there is a race more advanced than your wildest dreams Spartan?" Celestia put forth. "One so ancient that it has slipped from history almost entirely," Kim scoffed, shaking his head slowly. Celestia sighed, touching a hand to her brow and massaging her temples. "I could not compromise my position," Kim pointed a finger at her, letting full accusation fill the gesture.

"Don't feed me that bullshit," he snarled, taking the glare she cast upon him. "You knew I would find what you have been hiding for the past supposed thousand years. How long did you think this would stay a secret when four soldiers, who know about the situation, go out on leave, get drunk and talk about the mission?" Celestia scoffed, waving him off like a servant. Luna was bewildered, fear struck and full of concern for her sister. Kim threw up his hands, pulling his helmet off and tossing it aside. "I don't care if you believe me, but I _am _trying to save your pale ass!" Celestia picked up her chalice, taking a long drink from the glass. "Do you even care what might happen to your regime?" Celestia just continued to drink, draining the glass and refilling it. Kim huffed in frustration, surging forward and taking the glass and bottle from her before throwing it down with a shatter. "Your subjects will rise up and kill you! Do you hear me? They. Will. _Kill _you!" Kim shook her, trying to make her see reason. Celestia continued to stare to her left, a single tear running down her cheek. Kim followed her gaze, finding it fixed on Luna. 'Just the right heartstring,' he thought, letting her go.

"Fine," he said, turning around and picking up his helmet. "Ignore

me, refuse my council." He slammed the helmet onto his head, fixing the piece in place before striding to the door. He stopped, looking back over his shoulder. "But think about what they will do to her." Kim slammed his fist against the door, the sound of the bar being raised issued forth from the outside before the door opened. Kim walked out, leaving the monarchs alone.

"Tia, what is he talking about," Luna asked her sister, her face stricken with worry. Celestia just shook her head, tears falling but she refused to cry. She pulled the tasseled rope beside her chair, two servants bringing another bottle of wine. "This is no time for a drink, sister!" Luna exclaimed, offended by her action. She stood, a servant bringing her cloak at her bequest. "If what he said is possible, it must be fixed." She donned the black cloak, pulling the hood up. Celestia pushed back the glass her servant offered, taking the bottle from the other. Luna's face seemed to drain, her lips forming a hard line. "Fine," Luna said, stepping before Celestia. "I understand enough politics to know when ill fate is descending upon me. If you deign fit to find me I will be with Kim. His home seems to be the safest place at this moment." Luna squared her shoulders, turning around and taking two steps before being enveloped in darkness. Celestia waved off her servants, her tears halting as reality finally came down. Her experiment had failed, and soon she would have to make truly hard decisions.

Luna arrived outside of Kim's training facility, the landscape painted by the first of the moon's light in pale contrast. Three hours ago the warrior in question has barged into the throne room, demanding to know things she had thought came from a dream. The time between her sister's descent into the bottle and her raising the moon had been spent in introspection, trying to reclaim who she was before coming back to the world. The suits they used to wear had elongated their lives immensely during their rule over the creatures that had evolved while they were in cryo-sleep, the machinery having fortunately failed after the last Great War with the griffons for her sister.

She had remembered her old name, Lunar Grace, and her sister's, Solar Grace. She remembered having fled with her to the project she had developed, trying to escape the flood. She remembered more Forerunners having taken refuge with them, most going into cryo-stasis almost immediately.

Luna stood before the chain link fence that surrounded the facility, a sign warning any trespassers of an extremely high current that ran through the barrier. She sighed, magic having lost its fun now that she remembered how it came about. She concentrated on the teleportation grid that ran through the artificial planet, opening her eyes to find herself on the other side. She shook her head, remembering how Solar Grace had taught her the process.

"You close your eyes," Luna recited, walking further into the compound. "And concentrate on what you want to happen." She closed her eyes, concentrating on becoming invisible. The sensation of cool water flowing over her followed the thought. Luna opened her eyes, finding herself to be quite transparent. She smiled slightly; still fascinated by the technology level her sister had worked into the planet.

"Sir," The unicorn, Firecracker, called in the tech room of the

garage. Kim turned in the direction of her, walking over. Kim always thought she seemed the most normal thing on the planet, being something akin to a chestnut colored horse on harvest. "I've got an intruder in the northwest sector." Kim leaned over the tech operator, getting a clearer image on the screen with the turn of a knob. The camera panned across the section of terrain, not a squirrel to be found.

"Well," he said. "Where is it?" Firecracker shrugged, moving her loose hanging hair behind an ear.

"I have definite movement," she said, showing him the motion tracking monitor for her sector. "But I can make any visual confirmation." Kim looked over the camera display again, still finding nothing. He held up a hand, waving it around.

"Maybe it's a mouse," he said, turning around. "I'm going out to take a look at the sensitivity bolt on the machine." Kim walked over to the far wall of the room, grabbing a leather trench coat and filling the multitude of pockets with filled magazines. He checked one of them, quickly grabbing an XBR55 from the small arms locker before exiting into the grounds.

Outside the moon was on the rise, being almost halfway overhead. Kim looked up, staring at the white orb to find it's glow somewhere between weak and over strong but still not normal. He shook his head, averting his eyes from the sight before raising the rifle in his hands. The display showed north to be off to his right slightly, Kim walking forward into the northwest. 'I hate motion trackers,' he thought, loading a magazine into the weapon and releasing the action. 'Too sensitive and the wind will set them off, not sensitive enough and you get killed' Kim shook his head slowly, slinging the rifle across his back with a leather strap and tightening the cinch before drawing his pistol from its holster. He ejected the mag before hopping over a creek, checking the round count on the side before reloading it and returning it to its holster. "Firecracker," Kim said, keying the mic on his targeting monocle. The screen lit up, displaying an image of the unicorn at a display and a reticule. "Is the motion still in the northwest sector?"

"Negative sir," she said, shaking her head. "But Skies says she had movement about ten seconds ago moving into the north sector. She said it just stopped there, and she can't make any visual confirmation on what it was." Kim sighed, checking the compass on his rifle again and course correcting. "Sorry sir, maybe the tech's going haywire in this dry heat." Kim shook his head, cutting the com line.

"Kim," His radio blared in his ear, causing him to tear the piece off and let it hang by a cord. The earpiece continued to chirp around his neck, Kim reluctantly placing it back. The voice was considerably quieter now. "I'm so sorry! I forgot how to use this thing. Are you alright? Kim?" he recognized the voice, hearing footsteps beside him. Kim reached out at shoulder level, grabbing the air and yanking down the hood of Princess Luna to reveal her face and break the spell.

"What are you doing out here?" Kim asked. "We have had a few problems in this quarter with a cockatrice and a rouge manticores assaulting the troops lately. It's not safe." Luna held up her hands, mouthing a quick apology. "You should have just teleported to the hangar doors

and knocked." Luna simply nodded like a child being scorned. Kim looked her over, finding she was dressed more for pilfering pockets than royal business or even a night out of Canterlot. "Why are you sneaking around anyway?" Kim let his left foot take his weight, resting the spine of the BR on his right shoulder. "You look like your gearing up to rob someone." Luna shrugged, running her hands through her hair to move it out of her face.

"I thought on what you said to Solar Grace," she said, pulling on her cloak. "My sister, that is. If what you said were to happen, the revolutionaries would come after me first. And then she would be forced to retaliate. I decided this was the best place for me until the future reveals itself." Kim gave her a deadpan expression, shifting his weight to the other leg.

"What makes you think this is the safest place should that come to a head?" he asked returning his weapon to a more ready but still neutral position. "I'm not here to fight ponies. I'm here to train a force of ponies to fight an extra terrestrial threat should they rear their ugly heads." Luna nodded, accepting his parameters.

"But they still believe I am one of their princesses," she explained. "Should an assassin come seeking me while I was alone, yes my barriers would alert me to the dangers but I am still only one being with two eyes. Here there are already seventy two at least moderately trained soldiers and a rather formidably deterring barrier. That's seventy two more pairs of eyes to notice danger and the wherewithal to subdue them and question their intent." Kim took his turn to nod, accepting her reasons as preemptive planning rather than assumption. "And since said pairs of eyes are only moderately trained," she poked him on the chest. "I am going to stick to you like a Poison Joke affliction." Kim let out a smidgeon of laughter, shaking his head. "What's so funny?" Luna asked.

"Nothing," Kim said, finding the humor in the situation nigh on ludicrous. "Just now I have two native females following me around. It really is nothing, just some earth humor is all." Luna blushed, understanding his implication.

"No, nope, and definitely not," she said, smiling. "I'm not going to do what Captain Shield did to you." she informed, having been briefed by Kim after Sapphire had barged in on him while bathing. "But I am requesting that we share a room. I don't want to be too exposed to threats, and this seems to be a good precaution."

"If you hadn't have suggested it I would have demanded it," Kim said. "It's basic High Risk Target protection protocol to sleep as close as possible to the VIP." Luna blushed further, thankful that her skin tone was dark enough to hide it. Kim looked around, having heard something moving in the distance. "We should be RTB," he said. "Like I said, there's some nasty stuff hanging around here." A growl rolled across the low hills around them, Kim shouldering his rifle and checking the area's Motion tracker.

"Commander, we got the manticore again." Firecracker said over the radio. "I'm sending out beta team now. It's in the northeast sector now, moving your way." Kim swore under his breath, turning around and looking through the scope. About a mile out was the hulking shadow of the beast lumbering toward them.

"Let's get going," Kim said, walking backwards to keep the monster in his sights. "This counts as a hazardous situation," Luna nodded curtly, grabbing Kim on the shoulder and teleporting away. The manticore lumbered into the area, looking around and sweeping aside a bush before walking away. A moment later four unicorns in full tactical gear ran through, chasing the beast to drive it out of the facility.

****Yoâ€|****

****Anyway, how was it, was the plot twist good enough? Yeah, I know, OMG FORERUNNER PLOT TWIST!
>**

****Also, the earthpony Green Ash is based off my dad. Yes he is Irish lol****

****So, time for the credits because I am fracking drained.****

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****Sapphire is property of and used with permission from Bahamut Crisis Core****

8. Making a Stand

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Kim sat in the windowsill of his loft space, an MA3B rifle laid across his lap and the moon reflecting off his armor. He had Relieved Green Ash of his watch an hour ago, taking up the mantle of a guard for a while. Since Luna had come to him for asylum two weeks ago, Kim had found himself idly thinking more and more; thoughts he had never had since he was a child, since he had been abducted to save humanity from certain annihilation. Since his induction into the Spartan program, he had thought only of how to complete a mission without losing his men, but now he found himself gazing at stars and staring at the horizon at every chance. Kim looked up to the moon, noticing for the first time that it was much larger than the moon of Harvest, Earth or Reach. 'What is happening to me,' he question in his mind, silently hoping something would answer him. 'Is this what it feels like to be normal?'

The sound of a creaking floorboard behind him caused him to return to reality, lowering his vision to the horizon to check for any threats on his side of the base. He already knew who was moving about the room, so he paid them no mind. "You should be asleep," he said, adjusting the rifle across his lap to a more ready position. "You need to rest. You've been awake for the last fifty hours." Something moved about the grounds quickly, darting from the shadows and into a bush.

"I can't," Said a voice behind him as his motion tracker registered the person in the room. The dot on his HUD began to approach, coming into view as Princess Luna. She was dressed in a nightgown and silk robe, rubbing the sleeves to work some warmth into them in the chill fall night. "My mind is restless, and forcing myself to sleep is just

aggravating me." She turned around and sat in the window with Kim, staring at the sky. "What's your excuse?" she asked, turning her vision on him. Kim lifted the butt of his rifle from his lap.

"My turn to take guard," he said, nodding to her before looking out over the rolling hills that lay beyond his compound. There were a few towns-ponies out hunting on the crest of one of them, but he did not find anything suspicious. "Ash needed a break, so I decided to take up the slack." Luna pulled her robe closer to herself, trying to stay warm in the forty-degree weather. Kim opened a pocket and pulled out a grey rod. "Here," he said, handing the rod to her. "Bend it until you hear a snap and then hold it against your lower back." Luna took the rod, following his instructions as he returned to his watch. As she placed the gray item against her skin, she began to feel warmth emanating from it, the blood passing through her major vessels carrying it around her body quickly. She sighed contentedly as her shivering ceased.

"Thank you," she said quietly, leaning against the frame of the window to keep the item against her skin and free her hand. Kim nodded once, turning his head slowly to the right. A scope on an auto turret mimicked his motion as he watched something, Luna attempting to make out the object in the distance. "So this is what your men have been doing each night?" she asked, getting another nod. "Is it always this boring?" Kim shrugged, waving his left hand but keeping his wrist on his knee.

"Not always," he said. "But normally, yes. The reason your guards are stationed in the window at night is because of the Cockatrice that likes to invade my house." Luna's eyes widened at the mention of the beast. "And also to keep a watch out for the Manticore that's still prowling around. That one's bold." Luna gave him an inquiring look, silently asking for more on the issue. Kim shrugged again. "Last night Ash reported it making its way toward the garage. There it took on four guards with automatic weapons, only to survive and break several bones."

"Oh my," Luna gasped. "Are they alright?" Kim nodded once, touching a hand to his helmet.

"Firecracker, I have the Manticore by the west gate," he said, talking into his radio. There was a small silence before he spoke up again. "Send in Gamma Squad, authorized heavy weapons and lethal force. It's caused enough problems, Kim out." Luna looked out to the edge of the property, finding the hulking shadow of the beast sniffing around the fence. It lumbered around in the area of interest for five minutes, tearing up the soil and knocking over a tree before a group of armored ponies formed a semi-circle around it. The manticore roared at them, taking a crouched stance to fight. A pony on the right raised something onto their shoulder, a small red ball of light forming a foot beyond their faceplate; illuminating their armor with a bloody glow. The air was filled with a heavy roar of sound as the ball of light turned into a rod, striking the monster and driving through it with a spray of flesh and broken bones. As the rod dimmed out the manticore fell to its belly, the remaining three ponies walking up to it and drawing weapons from their thighs. The three opened fire on the beast's head, filling the manticore's skull with iron slugs from their machineguns.

"Tell Gamma congratulations for me on a well executed attack," Kim

said before turning to face Luna. The princess had a look of shock on her face, a hand covering her slightly open mouth as she continued to stare at what had happened. "And tell them to move it out of sight; our guest isn't too happy about it." Kim reached out and touched Luna on the shoulder, patting her slightly to draw her back to reality. Luna jumped slightly at the contact, blinking quickly before staring at Kim. "Are you alright?" Kim asked, getting a sluggish nod in return. 'Shit, she's in shock,' he thought, sighing before standing. "Come on; let's go sit by the fireplace." He said, standing up and slinging his rifle before helping her to her feet. He pushed her away from the window gently before closing the glass pane and inside shutters.

Kim walked into the living room of his house carrying two steaming cups, his helmet removed. He walked across the room to the black leather sofa, holding out the cup in his left hand. "Here you are," he said, Luna taking the cup. "Hot chocolate, fresh from the tin," She laughed slightly holding the cup in her hands to warm them. "I'm sorry you had to see that," Kim apologized, Luna shaking her head as he sat beside her.

"It's not your fault," she said, taking a sip of the hot drink before continuing. "It had to be done. The beast had gone rogue and it would have only caused more trouble if you had pushed it out." Kim sighed, taking a drink of his coffee. "I just didn't expect the event to be soâ€¦"

"Gory," Kim finished, getting a slow nod in return. He shrugged. "That's the non-linear rifle's MO," he explained. "Gratuitous destruction, I've seen it tear a hole through the interior of a covenant ship on several occasions and vaporize insurrectionist forces." Luna shivered at the thought, trying to clear the image out of her mind.

"It's a far cry from what I'm used to," Luna commented, rubbing the mug in her hands nervously. "But I'm undoubtedly certain it is needed for what your race faces." Kim nodded. "Speaking of, when do you suppose your fleets will come looking for you? You've been here for nearly a year, and I'm starting to think they may have forgotten about you." Kim smirked slightly, hoping her assumptions were correct.

"I'm certain they received some form of signal from the miniature you sister made for me," he said. "But other than that, I have no idea. My existence may never be found unless the covenant show up and Celestia uses the distress beacon I gave her." Luna gave him a sly look.

"You seem almost elated by this fact," she said, getting a chuckle from Kim. "I take it you don't like your kind for some legitimate reason." Kim nodded.

"Kidnapping me and then turning me into an instrument of war might be one," he explained. "But, then again I also am grateful for the abduction. It saved my ass from being glassed with the rest of the planet." The pair sat in silence for a few minutes, each enjoying their beverages quietly.

"You never talk about your life before the war," Luna stated, catching Kim off guard. "Each soldier I know tells about how fallen

comrades talk of the past and home, why don't you?" Kim shrugged, turning his empty mug over in his hand.

"Not much to talk about," he said, observing a crack in the glaze on his cup. "My family owned a five thousand acre wheat and corn farm, raised fifty thousand head of cattle—your standard Earth colony corporation subsidiary farm; and in the blink of an eye it was gone. I had been kidnapped and forced into service at the age of eleven." Kim tossed the cup aside, the mug landing on a table upright. "The more I think about it now, the angrier I get." Luna looked away, staring at the wall.

"Anyone would," she said, having dropped the cultural tensions of the ponies. "It's natural to be angry when someone removes what you found stable in life." Kim shook his head, causing Luna to return her view to him.

"Not for a Spartan," he said. "We don't feel conventional emotions as readily as other beings. We don't become depressed, angry, enraged, saddened or happy at things like experiences or chance happenings. It takes something that flows with our mental state. The success of a mission, the failure of a mission, and the losses of a comrade—those things bring out emotions, not memories." Kim shook his head again. "Something about this world, it's changing me; and not for the better."

"Why would feeling emotion not be better than sociopathy," Luna asked abruptly, honestly confused. "Everything strives to feel joy and companionship, sometimes they strive to be depressed or angry even," Kim shook his head once more, becoming frustrated.

"It's not that I wouldn't like to feel emotion," he explained. "It's that I would become dangerous to those around me if I could." Luna raised an eyebrow, silently prodding for information. Kim sighed, running a hand through his inch long hair. "A Spartan has the strength of twenty humans, the speed of a horse at full gallop and the endurance of a vehicle. We never tire, are never outrun and are never beaten in a fistfight. If I were to become panicked and struck out at someone innocent, I would more than likely kill him or her without meaning to. If I became enraged, I would make a hasty decision that would result in the loss of more lives than were necessary. Yes ONI's choice of chemicals in the augmentation process had an unforeseen side effect, but there is a reason they did not try to remove it. Being passive to most things that would traumatize the normal soldier is one of them." Kim leaned back on the sofa, the springs and wooden structure protesting loudly at the weight of his armor. "The reason you don't understand is because you have no idea what a Spartan is physically capable of."

The two sat in respective silence, listening to the wood snap and pop in the fireplace as it burned, the logs having filled the room and a few adjacent with warmth. Luna had forsaken the blanket she had brought down, the cloth laying on the sofa between them after the fire had heated to room satisfactorily. Kim was staring out the window to his left, watching as the guard lights scanned over the property with an impeccably tight grid, the sentries searching for the cockatrice that still prowled the grounds. Every now and then Warthogs would rumble by, more likely than not carting the manticore away in pieces.

The silence was broken by the sound of Luna yawning quietly, though it may as well have been an air horn to Kim. He looked over to find her rubbing an eye, her free hand further messing her hair. "Tired?" Kim asked, getting a shrug. "You've been awake for the past fifty hours at least. You should be in a near hallucinogenic state of exhaustion by now." Again, Luna shrugged. "Would you like to go to bed?" he questioned, once more receiving a shrug. Kim sighed loudly, remembering why he had opted for Lone-Wolf work when he was still being deployed. He leaned back further, staring at the ceiling and waiting for her to decide to answer him directly.

Luna looked over at him as he sighed, observing him up and down. She had always been an exceedingly good reader of body postures, but for some reason Kim had nothing to read. He was always squared away and frosty, no matter the circumstance. "Are you upset with me?" she asked, getting him to divert his eyes to her.

"Not particularly," he said. "But I am rather frustrated that you will not heed my advice." Kim sat up and leaned forward, resting his forearms on his knees. "Having trouble sleeping is not a problem, but when you cannot sleep for nearly a week you become more of a hazard to yourself than most threats. You will hallucinate, make errors in judgment and have accidents left and right." Kim ran a hand through his hair again, looking at the watch built into his armor. "And you should probably go to bed. It's nearly sunrise and I have somewhere to be for most of the morning. I'm going to leave you with Silver Lining when she gets here."

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Kim sighed as he walked onto the porch of the house, having finally convinced Luna to sleep. He did not know if she had actually fallen asleep, and he didn't much care. That was now Silver Lining's problem. He had to set up a long-range observation array, and it required his full attention. This installation to his compound was without a doubt, in his opinion and that of most inter-planetary forces, the most crucial.

Kim made his way down the road that had been cut from the lawn, the hog trail rumbling as vehicles carried and towed parts to the quartered away area. Kim raised his hand as one drove by, the one behind it slowing down enough for him to grab onto the roll cage and swing himself into the passenger seat. "What's the report on the array?" he asked, the pony reaching into a pocket on its black armor and handing him a tablet.

"Specialist Fair Wind sir," the mare said through the two-way radio in her helmet, Kim receiving it through a monocle earpiece. "The first three are up and Firecracker has them running. This is the initial report on the surrounding space for five AU in every direction. As you can see," She halted, the hog lurching as she swore. "Sorry sir, stray dog. I tried to miss it."

"Just drive, Specialist." He said, thumbing through the information on the screen. "If it gets in your way and is anything smaller than a cow then it's their fault they're dead." He turned the screen to an oscilloscope. The readings seemed to be rather odd for empty space, energy peaks on a sweep showed a star, the moon, a few planets and something unknown. "Do we have a reading on this?" he said, transferring the image to the monocle and sending it to her. She

shook her head after a second.

"Negative sir," she said, slowing down to go over a bump without jostling the trailer behind her. "Firecracker said she would have to make visual contact before the array is up to give you an answer. However, whatever it is, she's sure it isn't natural. Its readings don't act like a planet, satellite or sun, so she was wondering if you could take a look when we get there and get a few more dishes up. This one were pulling behind us is the part of the coms array." Kim nodded, looking up from the tablet and handing it back to Fair Wind.

Before them was the SOCOM building he had contracted for out of his budget. It was a large black building built in the local style. The walls were concrete, the dome over top of it covered in antennae and satellite dishes as large as three warthogs. It stood at five stories and high and covered about a quarter square mile of space. It was staffed with his first batch of recruits, Firecracker and her sister Star Burst having proven their selves technically proficient enough to lead the operation and train the new personnel. The Warthog rumbled loudly as it rolled to a halt, Fair Wind pressing the button start to turn the Hydrogen engine off. Kim sighed and climbed out of the hog, raising his hand and throwing around orders quickly.

"Fair Wind, grab two ponies and get this stuff unloaded! Be careful about it! You, go drag Star Burst and Firecracker out here! The rest of you listen to Specialist Wind here, she's in charge of the offload." Kim turned around as three ponies, one in armor and the other two in yellow uniforms, walked out of the building, hurrying over to him and saluting. "What's the twenty on the unknown signal," he asked before saluting back. "I hear tell that you found it with only half of the first stage up and running. Good work," Firecracker nodded.

"Well," she began. "Upon further observation and some major diversions of powerâ€¦" The sound of electrical sparks popping with a thunderous report filled the area, ponies stopping to look in the direction of the noise. "Sorry about that. The capacitors are readjusting to the lower current. Anyway, we were able to get a definitive that it is not any natural occurrence. It seems to be some form of artificial vessel, but I doubt it has taken notice of us. It seems to be drifting in space. The only reason we picked it up was from the residual energy it had at one point." She handed Kim a tablet, the screen showing a rather fuzzy image of something floating in the void. The colors were vibrant, the bright colors representing whatever energy the satellites could pick up and the black being nothing.

"Do you recognize it, sir?" Star Burst asked.

Kim started to shake his head, but stopped as he recognized something on the front of the object.. "Hold on a secondâ€¦" he mumbled enlarging the image and sharpening it. The image revealed a bright glow. Kim thumbed the screen changing images down the line until the glow was gone. He continued, the glow reappearing four frames later. "Get me a com line that can reach out ten AU's now. I have to make a call."

"Already have it sir," Starburst said, nodding to the partially constructed array. "All we have to do is reverse a few transistors,

boost two capacitors per dish and we can send and receive voice." She raised an eyebrow. "Although, sir, I don't see why you would like to talk to some space trash." Kim thrust the tablet into her hand carefully, walking past her slowly.

"Because it isn't just 'some trash'," Kim said, beginning to jog to the SOCOM building doors. The ponies exchanged quick looks, confused expressions heavy on their faces.

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Admiral Alex Manson woke up on the ground, his head throbbing and his mouth filled with the taste of hot copper. He worked an arm underneath himself, propping up on his left elbow. He gave himself a quick once over, finding that everything was in order before working his way to his feet. He stumbled once, his feet lifting from the deck. 'The spin is off,' he thought to himself, holding onto a corner of the bridge island. He looked around, the emergency lights having filled the room with a pulsating red light. All around him, ops personnel began to wake up. "Roll call!" he called out. "Everyone alright?" several groans emanated from random people as the others began to call out their condition. Admiral Manson kept a mental list as he pushed off the wall, making his way to the AI terminal in the bridge. He bounced around the room, using the walls to lever himself around the tight quarters, latching onto an access ladder to stop himself before the holo-tank. Alex swung his feet back below himself, pushing against the ladder to bring himself to an unanchored crouch as he flipped switches and typed in codes on the four-foot tall cylinder. After a minute light blossomed on the top, the admiral rising slowly and carefully so he wouldn't leave the ground. A twelve-inch tall figure of a hooded and cloaked man appeared in the light, bowing slightly. "Beowulf," Alex said. "What's the status on the reactor core?"

Beowulf turned to his right, bringing the main view-board online. The status of main systems, hull integrity, Shaw-Fugikawa drive status, Reactor condition and Life support were listed, each showed perfect condition other than the fact that they were offline. "Alright, what about gravity generators; can you get the spin back up on your own?" the AI shrugged, making an old praying gesture before nodding. "Good," Alex said, turning his head back over his shoulder. "Hold onto something, we're about to get gravity back." The ops crew worked their way back into their seats, those with injuries pushing themselves into a position to lessen the damage from a fall. Alex turned back to the Holo-tank, nodding once. The AI looked up, his face still obscured as the ship began to shake slightly. Within a minute, the gravity generators began to work, picking up speed quickly enough on back up electricity to cause the Admiral to stumble. "Now for the reactor core, and everything else." He said, the AI nodding again before disappearing.

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Kim walked into the Exo-Atmospheric Communications Center, or the EACC as the ponies had abbreviated it. He moved around the center island platform, taking a view of everything that was going on. Firecracker and Star Burst entered moments after Kim had climbed onto the raised platform, bringing the rest of the ops crew with them. "Come one, come on," Kim said in a voice slightly below a yell. "We are wasting time, they could be dying up there!" he said, his voice

elevating in volume as he spoke quickly. "Bring up the coms, I want contact and I want it yesterday!" Starburst took control of several screens, typing in commands to the code of the dishes. Firecracker picked up three stations as the others filed into their seats. "Whats the time on the relay?" Kim demanded.

"One minute sir," Star Burst said as she typed rapidly. "I have to be careful enough so I don't permanently damage the dishes." Kim gripped the rail before him hard, tension building in his stomach. "I have it sir." She said after thirty seconds bringing up an oscilloscope on the main display. Kim released the bar, hand prints pressed into them. "Your live in five, four, three, two" the screen began to register a received transmission.

"_This is the UNSC Stand, we are disabled in uncharted space. Can anyone hear us? I am Fleet Admiral Alex Manson, I have wounded and no way to treat them. Our first and second reactors are unable to be brought online._" Kim halted at the sound of the voice, not having expected Fleet Admiral Manson to be looking for him. The message repeated once more, Kim gathering his wits before lifting the mic to his lips.

"This is Sierra Alpha-Five-Eight-Seven, Commander Kim Levinson of the UNSC SPARTAN program," he said. "I am reaching out to the UNSC cruiser _Stand_, can you hear me." he laid the mic down, leaning against the railing. "Set it to repeat until they reply." He ordered, slightly awestruck that they had sent the toughest sonovabitch in the UNSC navy after him. The silence was deafening as they awaited a reply.

...

"_This is Sierra Alpha-Five-Eight-Seven. Kim Levinson of the UNSC SPARTAN program. I am reaching out to the UNSC cruiser Stand, can you hear me?_" The crew cheered loudly as the message repeated once more, nearly the entire five thousand manning crew having gathered near the bridge to hear the message. The Admiral cracked a slight smile, giving himself a mental pat on the back.

"You found him!" one of the crewman said.

The Admiral raised his hand calling a silence as he activated the com system and locking onto the signal. "We can hear you Sierra. Damn good to know your alive."

...

Kim laughed as they replied on an open com line, elated they were all alive. "I hear you need a reactor or two turned back on," he said into the mic.

"_Yeah, I guess we do son._" The reply said. "_Is there any way we can get the boys on the ground near you? I have five thousand head of cabbage to unload before it rots._" Kim chuckled slightly, waving to Firecracker to send coordinates on the land.

"I have about ten square miles for you boys to set up a cooler," Kim said back. "I'm sending land coordinates on the center planet, bring 'em in boss." Kim dropped the mic, snapping his fingers and inhaling through his teeth quickly. "Star Burst, get Thom near the west

quarter. We have to lay out the welcome mat."

This is a reference to Men In Black 2.

So what do you guys think, Cliffhanger enough for you? Yeah I know, I'm evil ;P

So please review, I had to battle off writers block and those little opinions make my day.

9. Final Exams

Admiral Manson stood in the den of Kim's house, his hand raised to his brow while the other rested on the grip of his sidearm. "Let me get this straight, Commander," he said, pinching the bridge of his nose and massaging it lightly. "You made contact with a tier four civilization, promised them the protection of our already thinly spread military, and are training them to use UNSC standard issue weapons and tactics?" Kim simply nodded once, having been ordered to drop the bullshit and get to the point. Alex sighed, shaking his head slowly before dropping his hand. "I have to stop letting you out of the house. Trouble follows you." Kim smirked slightly, adjusting his hold on his helmet. "So what else have you been up to around here?"

"Babysitting mostly," Kim said, causing the admiral to raise an eyebrow. Kim laughed nervously, knowing he would never live this down. "One of the locals has information that has to be guarded, and since I wasn't doing anythingâ€¦" suddenly the Admirals face reddened, his eyes averting to the carpet as a door shut behind Kim.

"Kim," the voice of Luna said behind him. "I was wondering where you kept the towels. I just got out of theâ€¦" the door that had shut opened quickly, a pair of boots entering at a hurried pace before stopping dead in their place.

"This is Princess Luna, monarch of Equestriaâ€¦" Kim said, turning around and stopping half way there. He caught just enough visual data to warrant turning back to the admiral; a curve, bare skin and a belly button ring standing fast in his brain as his face began to blossom with color. "Upstairs, my room, top shelf of the closet I usually keep my armor in," he said to her, focusing on a painting he had acquired during his stay. He heard some hushed words from the unicorn named Silver Lining before the sounds of retreating footsteps and a door closing reached his ears. The silence in the room was splitting almost, lasting longer than it should and nearly measurable by the movement of the sun. The admiral cleared his throat loudly to break the silence, Kim stammering before answering the obvious question. "She-she's rather comfortable here, considering I don't have many visitors and allâ€¦" He could feel the blush on his face deepen as the admiral sucked air through his teeth.

"Let'sâ€¦ take a walk around the facility," Manson said, Kim nodding quickly and leading him to the door.

The grounds were buzzing compared to the state it was in before. Pelicans zoomed overhead as Mongooses, Hogs, and Scorpions with heavy lifting attachments worked in their cramped quarters. Kim had told

the truth, he did have ten square miles for the Admiral's marines to work with, but it had to be divided up to accommodate his consistently growing school of planet side defenders.

"This is a rather organized operation you have here," Admiral Manson admonished, stepping off the porch and walking beside the now muddied road. "How many students did you say you have?" Kim followed close to the admiral, his helmet in his hands.

"I have one thousand and fifty three on site," Kim said, stepping to the side to avoid a mud splash from a passing Hog. "Currently graduated I have two hundred. The numbers are continually growing also. I am expecting four more twelve member platoons in the week." The Admiral gave him a strange look at the mention of graduated cadets. "I understand your confusion at having that number graduated in under half a year. But in their defense sir, the ponies are a very adaptable race. They pick up things like weapons mechanics, Code, tactics and science very quickly. I seriously doubt that in an exercise, any of the marines you have could match them in open combat, and the ODSTs would have a tough fight as well." Admiral Manson scoffed in good humor at his statement, motioning to a group of ODSTs in full gear running around the base.

"You mean to tell me that these tier four beings could best the most highly trained humans around," Kim shrugged, donning his helmet and sending some silent commands. "Next to a Spartan of course. I would like to see one thing that makes these ponies better than an ODST." At the Admiral's challenge, six Pegasi in full gear flew overhead performing an aerial hand-to-hand exercise. The admiral watched as the six ponies punched and kicked, tackling each other at speeds that would incapacitate an unarmored soldier and driving them into the ground before forcing the other to yield. "Ok, that would be viable, if humans could fly that is." Kim rolled his eyes inside his helmet, ordering further to his ponies. Kim led the Admiral to the firing range, following it up with the close quarter's assault course.

"This is where we train recruits toâ€¦" Kim thought quickly, motioning frankly with his hands. "For lack of a better word we train them to storm a house or building. There is a demonstration scheduled in about three minutes."

"This should be good," the Admiral said, his tone confident. "What are the parameters?" Kim pointed to the roof of the outside wall of the building. On top of it were fifteen earth ponies with MA5C rifles and DMRs.

"The objective is," Kim began, walking Admiral Manson through the process. "For a single squad or a solo operative to enter the building, by force or covert action, and secure, defend and extract a high value target." The Admiral nodded appreciatively, the difficulty of the exercise to his liking. "This is also the final test before graduation. This course can make or break a recruit for Special Forces training candidacy." The Admiral looked over the course and at the station screens beside them.

The challenge began with a four hundred meter field with minimal cover, followed by a breach-and-clear maneuver. Upon entering there were supposedly an undisclosed amount of soldiers, each set up as they thought best. In the center of the basement level was the

package, bound and gagged. "This recruit has passed the test already, correct?" Kim looked over the roster, finding the recruit in question being Little Strife.

"Yes sir," Kim said, pointing to the pony in armor at the other end of the field. His helmet was removed and the horn guard was in place. His skin was gray white and he held an AR in his free hand. "He passed the first one with flying colors, so he is up for Special Ops training due to a natural talent." The admiral lifted a pair of binoculars to his face, looking over Strife with a critical eye. The pony held himself with a relaxed nature, the expression on his face made him seem like he hadn't slept since he was born.

"Are you sure he's fit for service," the admiral asked, looking at Kim. "He looks like he's been put through a shit hammer already." Kim shrugged, holding a two-way radio in his hands now.

"He's always looked that way," he explained. "He sleeps, rests at any given time he can and eats like a Pachyvine." The admiral smirked; taking the radio from Kim and lifting it to his face.

"Thoughts of home soldier?" he said, mentioning the Harvest livestock Kim had named. "Master Sergeant Jenkins, I need fifty marines by the firing range ASAP. Make sure there is a squadron of well rested ODSs in there." The reply came as an affirmative, the admiral handing Kim his radio back. "I want to see how efficient your recruits are," he elaborated without prompting. "I am replacing the opposition with marines and ODSs. If you say these ponies are good, they shouldn't have any problems." Kim nodded, ordering the ponies to stand down and file out.

Five minutes passed by as they waited for the admiral to issue orders, letting the team leaders do the remaining work. The radio chimed the status of the soldiers, Kim ordering a weapons check to make sure they had loaded stun rounds. "_All checked and double checked Sir, awaiting the start of the exercise._" Kim nodded once, changing the channel.

"Are you ready Corporal," Kim asked, getting a thumbs up across the field. Kim nodded before Strife moved into the tree line, quickly disappearing into the undergrowth. He turned towards the monitor, tossing the radios into a box across the station. "Alright sir, you had a surprise for me, and now I have one for you. Let's get this party started." Kim laid his hand on a black button, pressing it in and activating an air horn to signal the start of the exercise.

And nothing happened

The marines atop the structure scanned the tree line and the whole field, weapons ready and itchy triggers all around. A few stray rounds were fired, bullets landing in the undergrowth as something moved unseen below them. Silence fell over the area now; the only sounds were some coughs and the sounds of weapons being adjusted. "Kim, I think it's quite clear what's going on," Admiral Manson said searching the trees with his binoculars for any sign of the recruit. "You have only proven to me that your native conscripts are cowards that can't pull the" he was cut off as the sounds of gunfire shredded the silence, the concrete walls of the building huffing dust as the marines above took cover. "What the hell" the admiral

muttered as seventeen MA5C rifles floated out of the trees, followed closely behind by Strife. He walked leisurely behind his wall of guns, half of the weapons reloading as the other half continued to fire. In the corporal's hands was a DMR, raised and sighted at the windows as he picked targets out of the interior. Once or twice a marine above decided to fight back, being struck down with a burst of fire to the chest.

Kim simply smirked as the admiral watched the process unfold, his mouth hanging loose. "Not what you expected was it?" Kim asked, keying the observation screen and loading the feed from the cameras in each room. "This is why Strife has made Special Operations training. He has an innate ability, due to some strange local talent, to create weapons of ever expansive complexity." Kim looked up in time to see Strife send his weapons into the windows, mowing down the marines with little difficulty. "Admiral, if you would direct your attention to the display on the table." Kim said, drawing him away from the scene. The admiral looked over at the screen, catching action in the left center portion. The paralytic in the rounds, keeping them grounded for the next thirty minutes, stunned the marines. Strife stood in the first room, weapons spawning around him as he concentrated on an unknown directive.

The weapons Strife had summoned were making their way through the building, silently flanking the marines and taking them down in one fell strike. "How did he do that?" The admiral asked, bewildered that the pony had the power to work so ruthlessly efficient. Strife opened his eyes again, striding forward through the structure and stopping at the ladder that led to the roof. He opened a pouch at his waist, withdrawing a canister of some sorts. "What is he doing?" the admiral questioned further, Strife pulling the pin on the canister and tossing it up the trap door. The camera in the top center portion of the screen showed the canister rising four feet into the air, the trap door glowing before slamming shut. The canister struck the door, a bright flash blotting out the feed before revealing the marines stunned and on their backs. "Is that legal?" the admiral blurted, following Strife as he made his way to the basement stairs. He stood in the doorway, kicking down the door before ducking to the side as gunfire echoed from the level below. Inside the basement, the camera caught nine flashes of light, nine cans appearing at waist level before exploding with a blinding flash and a thunderous report. "Clever," the admiral mused as the ODSTs stumbled around the room. The camera that was focused on Strife no longer showed the pony, instead feeding them an image of an empty room.

In the center square of the screen, the ODSTs had recuperated and were checking the door, two of them leaving the basement to chase down the pony before being called back. Upon entering, the soldiers laid down their weapons, their lieutenant held at gunpoint. Strife lifted his M6D and fired on the ODSTs, dropping each of them before placing a round in the back of the Lieutenants chest harness. Strife made his way over to the bound target, holding out his hand and creating a knife before cutting the restraints and pulling out the gag. He made his way up the stairs, keeping the VIP behind himself as he made his way out the back and sounded the air horn.

"Highest marks Corporal," Kim shouted to the pony, the gathered crowd of graduates and some marines applauding as the pony took a bow. "I think your performance warrants further training. Well done." Kim turned to the admiral; Manson's face a mixture of awe and

embarrassment. "Do you think they will do, sir?" Kim asked, the Admiral laughing quietly as he shook his head.

"I guess so Kim," he said. "I suppose I thought the fact that they were only trained for a few weeks before being graduated meant they would be lacking in skill. However, I forgot to take into consideration that the person training them was a Spartan." Kim nodded once, feeling a modicum of pride in the given praise.

"And which Spartan better to train them than you," A female voice behind him said. Kim felt a switch throw in his brain, the fight or flight reflex causing him to draw his sidearm and aim at the unknown infiltrator. Kim stopped in shock at what he saw, a woman of around five six and graying blonde hair standing in the middle of a semicircle of ODST soldiers in full gear. "Nice seeing you again Mr. Levinson." Kim holstered his weapon, saluting the woman.

"Doctor Halsey," Kim said quickly, dropping his hand and staying at attention. "Thank you for the compliment Ma'am." Dr. Catherine Halsey waved a hand, shaking her head slightly.

"Drop the Bullshit Commander," she said, Kim relaxing as he was ordered to. "How have you been," she asked, walking away from her guards. Kim motioned behind himself.

"Take a look, Ma'am," he said. "This is what I have been doing for the past half year." Halsey shook her head again.

"I didn't ask what you have been doing. I asked how you've been." Kim raised an eyebrow, causing Halsey to massage her temples. "All of that higher education and you still don't understand how to interact with women." Kim blushed slightly, the color going unnoticed. "If I asked that question to an AI and it gave me that response I would give it a clean bill of health. Right now, Kim, I need to know how you have been feeling mentally and physically. Have you been frustrated, upset... joyous even?" Admiral Manson spoke up, cutting Kim off from answering.

"Doctor Halsey, I fail to see what relevance this poses," he said. "Right now I would say our attentions should be focused on the facility Kim has built on a planet with obsolete technology and the soldiers he is training, which I might add can do what takes four ODSTs to do." Doctor Halsey glared at the graying man, her expression taking on the usual deadpan nearly instantly afterwards.

"My apologies, Admiral," she said. "You are correct. I would very much like to see where you monitor communications and work most of your sciences. The natives must be taking advantage of the funding you bring in from their leaders to create weapons or equipmentâ€|possibly even medical applications?" Kim nodded, leading her to the other side of the facility, her guards in tow.

Kim let the door to his house close by its self, the cross breeze from the open windows causing it to slam rather loudly. He sighed, tossing his helmet across the room and rimming the hat rack without aiming. "Baldur, I'm home," he said, causing the AI to appear over his terminal. The AI seemed to be rather worried. "How was your day," he asked, half joking. The AI shrugged in its projection.

"Nothing," it said simply. "I have spent the majority of the day

collaborating files with Beowulf, considering Dr. Halsey brought a terminal down with her to store him in. the rest of the day has been spent either doing idle calculations and organizing and interpreting data received from the squadrons and solo operatives in the field or off line." The AI clasped his hands behind himself. "And how did your meeting with the good doctor go?" Kim sighed again as he took a bottled drink from the refrigerator.

"About the same as it always goes," he said. "When she isn't interrogating my mental state and giving me an evaluation I was informing her of the ponies' willingness to join the UNSC." He sat on the armchair next to the already active fireplace. "Did you know Bypass was using his funding to develop a safer alternative to open heart surgery?" The AI's expression became one of confusion and surprise.

"I did not," he said, watching Kim as he took a long quaff from the bottle. "I need to reiterate my ultimatum to the science wing again, don't I?" Kim nodded slowly, holding the bottle by the neck loosely.

"You made sure to keep the Forerunner facts to a minimum," he asked, receiving a curt nod. Kim nodded back. "Good. The less about their game the good doctor knows the better." Kim heard the upstairs door open and close, the sound of metal-soled boots descending them quickly reaching his ears before Silver Lining came into view. "Hello," Kim said blankly, watching the obviously aggravated pony walk to the door.

"Sorry sir," he said, opening the door and standing in the doorway. "I never thought I would say this but I cannot stand another moment of Luna's prattle." Kim laughed quickly, cutting it short for effect to see the pony fidget nervously.

"It's no problem," Kim said in good humor. "I should be apologizing for not having someone come and relieve you. I'll take up the slack." The Unicorn nodded quickly, putting on his helmet as he saw the rain outside begin to fall. "Go have some fun in town, you week's leave starts now." The pony saluted, Kim giving him a quick acknowledgment before letting him leave. Kim sighed and stared out the window, wondering what Luna could have done to piss off the soldier. "In three, two, one—" he mused aloud before a voice came from upstairs, along with a closing door.

"Kim," Luna called. "Are you home yet?" she said. Kim mulled the idea of letting her think he wasn't there for a moment before replying.

"Yes ma'am," he called back, letting her come to him. She descended the stairs, coming into view as she rounded the corner. She was garbed in a rather tight fitting blue dress, the skirt flaring halfway down her thighs to kiss the ground lightly by her sandaled feet. Kim looked at her quickly, averting his eyes as memories of earlier in the day filled his mind. "What's the occasion?" he asked, getting her to blush slightly.

"No occasion," she said, looking down at herself and maneuvering to view the rest of the garment. "Why? Do you think I'm dressed a little too formally?" Kim raised his eyebrows, looking her over after being given permission and noticing that she wasn't wearing any

undergarments. "It's just something I grabbed from the closet. It might be the least expensive thing I own." Kim nodded slightly, finishing the drink and tossing it across the room. The bottle landed in the wastebasket with a clatter, the glass striking four other bottles just like it. Luna looked in the direction of the basket, quickly turning back to him. "Trying to get drunk, are we?" she said humorously.

"Nah," Kim said. "Just found out that I really like the local Cola drinks." He returned his attention to her dress, raising one eyebrow questioningly. "That's the least expensive thing you own?" he asked, genuinely curious. "My mother would have killed to have worn that on her wedding." Luna raised her eyebrows, pulling her head back slightly and looking down quickly. She shrugged, walking up to him and posing slightly.

"Do you think it looks that good?" she asked, scenarios developing in her mind that brought more color to her cheeks. Kim nodded, catching the hem in his fingers and feeling the material through his glove. Luna froze as he grabbed her dress, her breath catching as color filled her face.

"Kim," she said quietly as she looked in Baldur's direction, the AI bowing before disappearing. "Do you thinkâ€¦" The opening of the front door cut her off, causing her to flinch and face the opening. In the doorway stood Doctor Halsey, her coat wet from the rain and her head cocked slightly to the side. Kim looked slowly in the doctor's direction, his eyes forming a glare and returning to normal quickly. Doctor Halsey looked from Kim to Luna quickly, her head still cocked slightly as she crossed her arms. "W-who are you?" Luna asked, feeling like a child with her hand caught in the cookie jar.

"She'sâ€¦" Kim began, being cut off promptly.

"You could say I am his mother," she said, turning her head slowly to rest in the exact opposite position. "And I don't know you well enough to leave you two alone yet." Kim let the corner of Luna's dress fall from his fingers, standing slowly and placing a hand on Luna's shoulder. "Leave," Doctor Halsey demanded.

"Stay close though," Kim said. "I'm on duty right now." Luna nodded quickly, turning and exiting the room without taking her eyes from the intruder. The two waited as they were until they heard the guest room door close, Halsey only walking in far enough to shut the door. Kim opened his mouth to say something but Catherine held up a hand, effectively silencing the Spartan.

"How have you been feeling, Kim," she said, pronouncing each word with care and talking deliberately. Kim waved a hand to the chair opposite his, Halsey ignoring his offer and standing as she was. "Answer me. How have you been feeling?"

"How do you mean, Ma'am?" Kim counter questioned. "You walk into my home unannounced and intimidate my chargeâ€¦"

"Is that what she is to you?" Halsey questioned back. This caught Kim off guard, causing him to blink twice. "I caught the look you threw at me, be it unintentional, and I know first love when I see it." Kim blushed slightly, about to argue that Luna was under his care and

nothing more until Halsey continued. "And there it is," she said. "You are about to defend yourself by saying she is only a responsibility." She reached into her coat and pulled out a tablet computer, throwing it to Kim. He caught the device blindly, looking down as he turned it over. "Nanites," Halsey said simply. "These little buggers are everywhere here. In the ground, the waterâ€¦ hell, they are even in the air." Kim looked over the information. She was not lying. "That's why I've been asking you the same question, and it seems the answer is obvious. These microscopic devices are rewiring your brain to return it to what a normal human's would be." Kim looked up, raising an eyebrow and laying the tablet down on a table.

"What does this haveâ€¦" she cut him off again, causing him to feel anger for the first time since his abduction.

"The reason we didn't try to counter act to effects of the chemical is to protect innocent lives. You could kill an Elite with the flick of your wrist. Do you think you could do any less to a civilian if you became confused or made a mistake? The fact that we made you so analytical and logical is to keep collateral damage to a minimum and increase efficiency." Doctor Halsey crossed the room, standing before Kim and placing a hand on his breastplate. "I am sorry that that had to be done but it was necessary." Kim huffed several times, his vision blurring as he fought his mind for a counter argument. He felt Halsey's hand cup his cheek, her thumb wiping something wet away before her serious expression turned to one of compassion. "This is Sadness, Kim," she said softly, the feeling of warm water falling down his face persisting. "Go ahead; follow what your body is telling you to do. Let the emotions fill you." Kim clenched his hands, holding his breath and biting on nothing. "Cry, Kim. You will feel better afterwards." He refused to follow her order, pushing her away from him gently and crossing the room. He leaned on the stone counter on the edge of the room, glaring at the reflection in a silver bowl. He watched himself through the tears as his face reddened; the muscles in his head working as he clenched his jaw and the tears fell from the point of his nose.

"You took everything from me," he growled under his breath, gripping the edge of the counter until the stone slab cracked. "You forced me into your military as some guinea pig freak," he continued, his voice increasing in volume as he tore a triangle of the counter away. "And now that I'm finally happy for the first time in fourteen years you are going to take it away again!" Kim raised his fist and brought it down on the counter, flattening the edge of the bowl and causing the stone to spider web. He raised his fist again, smiting the counter once more and sending several chips into the air. He repeated the action, the counter finally giving way and causing him to fall to his knees. "It isn't fair! I should not have to risk the life I was forced to accept so that you can cower behind your test tubes and white coats! I should be a farmer, raising Pachyvines and harvesting grain, mending that leak in the roof of the top floor and fixing the broken hose in the combine engineâ€¦ I shouldn't be some half machine freak fighting split chinned aliens on some planet I have never heard of for some planet I have never been toâ€¦"

Kim's voice continued to become quieter as he listed off the things he should be doing and the things he shouldn't have to do, Doctor Halsey deciding on a course of action quickly. She turned away from him, walking towards the room Luna was hiding in and pulling the door

open quickly. Luna fell onto her hands as the door swung wide, looking up to find the woman from before holding out a helping hand. "He needs you now," Halsey said, helping Luna to her feet. "Maybe he didn't before, but if you don't fix my mess he will possibly kill everything on this planet." Luna gave her a shocked look.

"Why me," she asked nervously, still not trusting the strange woman. Dr. Halsey walked her around the corner, letting her see Kim in his broken state.

"I should have a wife and kids," Kim mumbled between sobs. "I should be planting the first crop of the year, buying seed and livestock like father taught me and quartering off my land" Luna brought her hand to her mouth, her face drooping as Kim continued to talk about things she did not know about.

"This is what he should have never become," Halsey said quietly beside Luna. "But I can't fix my own mess." Luna looked at her, silently demanding an explanation. Halsey sighed, adjusting her glasses. "The Nanites are returning his mind to that of a normal human, which is dangerous because of his physical abilities. The reason I cannot fix this is because I caused it, and I doubt he would be forgiving if my face were the next he sees. He loves you more than he knows. And if I have learned anything over my years of military science, is that a soldier will kill for what he cares about, and will not stop until he is assured they are safe." Luna looked at Kim and back to Halsey several times.

"What do I do?" she asked as Halsey made her way to the front door. She stopped in the doorway after opening it, pulling up her hood.

"Ensure him that you're safe," was all she said before she closed the door, leaving them alone.

****Oh my Gods****

****This could be bad for the world****

****Please review guys, makes me happy in the pants when I see those little opinions. Even if they are flames :)****

****CREDITS!****

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10. Vacations

****I would like to inform you all, before this chapter begins, that in Chapter Nine of this story events of importance were unfolding in the background across the planet; named Bastion by Celestial Fire and Lunar Grace. This is one of such events****

Finally, a vacation; and damn did she need it.

Sapphire mused to herself about how her day was going to go as she read the newspaper in a coffee shop in Braelin. On the table beside her was her cream-colored trench coat, needed for the seasonal rains,

now folded and laid over the edge of the table since the sky had cleared. She had moved her tea and doughnuts outside, the sun beating against her deep blue skin comfortably. She flipped the page she was holding to give it more integrity, reading the main headline. It was a report on the danger from space that now faced them, informing all those who were willing to travel to their recruitment centre and sign a letter of recommendation for transfer after basic training.

'Even the free press is getting in on the Call-To-Arms,' she thought as she turned the page, finding more about the area's events. 'You have no idea how far your influence is spreading Kim.' She lifted her cup from its saucer, taking a sip before stopping halfway and lowering it. The article she had stopped on read that her brother, Mat Shields, was playing the Symphony hall with Octavia and her Four String Quartet. It seemed, once again, that her reason for not taking vacations was justified. Each time she would visit a city he would be somewhere nearby, and each time it would be completely unintentional. She sighed, folding the paper in half and rolling it up before depositing it in her shoulder bag. She stood from her seat, placing a twenty-Bit note on the table and laying her coat over her crooked arm before leaving the shops outdoor section.

Upon entering the street, she received several stares from stallions on both the opposite sidewalk and her own, their eyes lingering on her tight fitting dress and bare legs and arms. She smirked, taking pleasure in the fact that she was so successful at her young age of twenty-seven. Most of the tourists to the Land of Hops were graying couples or rich business mares and stallions, all reaching their fifties and higher. She turned on her six-inch heels, letting the crosscut hem of her dress move on its own time as she strode down the street lithely. She continued toward the older section of the city, intent on viewing the well-preserved structures built out of the stone that the city had originally been hollowed out of. She could already see sparse remnants of the city's original sprawling structures, usually some of the hollow stone huts melded with newer red brick construction. 'Quite sad how much of our history is being lost by expansion,' she mused, standing on a street corner and calling a taxi.

Sapphire stood before a podium, reading about a large building that lay in ruins. She had entered the downtown area of Braelin an hour ago, having admired the architecture and artistic style of the locals for the majority of the time before moving into the historic areas. The plaque before her detailed the bombing of Braelin by the Griffin Empire in 1919 CL, noting at the end that the building before her was in fact detonated by their own forces to halt the enemy advance and force them back; bringing an end to the forty year long war. A feeling of slight sorrow fell over her, remembering how many ponies had fallen to the Griffin Army's automatic weapons and land tanks in the war. She hung her head slightly, offering a silent prayer to the deceased. One fighter fell onto her mind heavily, remembering how her father had been crippled in the Great War. The sadness clung to her until it was replaced with anger towards her brother for refusing to appreciate the sacrifice their father had made to ensure their future.

Sapphire sat at the bar of a club, listening to the sounds of a rock and roll band as she nursed a whiskey and cola. She sat there, appreciating the direction the music of the new generation was developing. The band was reciting an old ballad to the fallen, the

tune worked with effectively to keep close to the original sound while simultaneously making the song their own. She finished her drink, snapping her metal fingers to get the bartenders attention. The Unicorn behind the counter walked over, saying something in the region's native language. She had no idea what he was saying, having over looked the need to learn the language and simply pointed to her glass. The unicorn nodded, filling her glass with some more ice cubes and whiskey before topping it off with cola. "Danke," she said, having picked up the local niceties quickly from her hotel. The barkeep nodded, bowing slightly before returning to other matters. She placed her left forefinger into the drink up to the second joint, swirling a cube of ice idly as the band played out the ballad.

"Alone tonight?" a deep voice said beside her. She reached into her shoulder bag and withdrew a chrome plated M6D-HE pistol Kim had given her and laid it on the counter, taking a drink as the silent statement stood fast. The owner of the voice placed a muted black M6/SOCOM pistol next to hers with his left hand, the slides lying opposite each other. "Good to see you Captain," Sapphire looked to her right slightly, finding the owner of the voice to be Black Fire. "I haven't seen you out of uniform in..." he let his eyes trace her form slowly, appreciating every detail the tight dress screamed. "Well I have to say I have never seen you out of uniform." Sapphire smirked, holding the glass before her lips.

"And you never did," she whispered, taking a sip before setting it down and turning towards him. "I wasn't here and I assume your orders say you weren't either." Black Fire nodded once. Sapphire smirked, raising her right arm to her lap and crossing her legs slowly. "Good. Then this will go unnoticed." Black Fire raised an eyebrow, utterly confused by her statement. "All of those Black Operations lessons and you still can't read a mare," she said, laying a soft kiss on him.

Sapphire stood on the platform in downtown Braelin, waiting on the conductor to open the doors to the train. She was wearing her uniform and some pieces of her Guard armor, her trench coat covering all of them save for her greaves. At Oh-four-hundred hours that morning, her vacation had ended, having to return to her duties as soon as she woke. She had pushed Black Fire out of her room with a smile, leaving him to his former engagements and trusted he would never speak of what had happened. Her face flushed slightly as she recalled last night, biting her lip to stymie the longing she felt. 'Control yourself Captain,' she thought, boarding the train as the conductor opened the doors. 'What would your father say if he was still here?' she chuckled slightly as she placed her travel bag in the rack above her seat. 'He would either scold you for being so impulsive or scold you for not having bore him grandfoals yet.'

She took off her coat, hanging it on the rack next to the window as a knock sounded from the door. "Come in," she said, the door opening slightly before somepony called in.

"Captain," the young male voice said. "I have the trunk you requested be brought directly to you. The only problem is that the trolley won't fit through the door." Sapphire huffed, opening the door completely and lifting the trunk from the cart with her right hand. The young male behind the cart stared in awe as she turned the trunk sideways and slipped into the room. "Thank you ma'am," he said,

Sapphire handing him a tip before closing the door.

Sapphire pushed the trunk underneath the window, sitting back and crossing her legs while staring at the ponies that milled about the station as the train began to roll forward. She continued to watch Braelin pass by, the countryside closing in on them as they passed under the city walls. She sighed, leaning forward and taking a folder off the trunk and opening it. Inside was a Griffin Observation Outpost report, detailing her current directive. Black Fire had filled her in at breakfast, telling her he believed something big was about to go down on the border, that there was a terrorist plot employing corrupted ponies and rouge dragons, and of a plan to hijack the train she had boarded. She knew the tracks she was on, that the train would enter Griffin territory on a De-Militarized Zone for ten minutes; but what Black Fire had told her had convinced her that today was her unlucky day.

She opened the trunk, taking out a suit of Mk I Equestrian Battle Armor. The black suit was Semi-Powered, allowing her to lift more and run faster, and was bullet proof up to a .50 caliber slug. She ran over the details of the dossier as she latched the suit to her body, taking care to affix each fitting with wires and hoses. She was to climb onto the roof of the passenger cars, at maximum four from the engine, and keep a watch for any of the feathered bastards. She picked the helmet up from the trunk, finding a note taped to the full frontal visor.

Sapphire, I thought this might help you. It was given to me before the second augmentation, but now that I have MJOLNIR, it no longer serves a purpose. I am stronger than it is. This is Semi-Powered Infantry armor, designed by the UNSC, that I have had altered to fit an earth pony.

PS: Celestia approved it for daily guard work if you so desire to take up an extra responsibility as advance soldier and all that blah.

Regards and affection,

UNSC Com. Kim Levinson.

Sapphire smiled at the notion, glad that he had thought of her. 'Maybe there is hope...' she thought, feeding her Ego as she donned the helmet. The display ran her through the tutorial, loading maps after tutoring her how to control the suit properly. Sapphire was about to begin her mission as a video screen loaded in the center of her view.

"Sapphire," the image of Kim said. "I am certain that you've been briefed on the situation already, if not think OPEN FILE BRIEFING." The video paused for five seconds, continuing after she had ignored the extension. "Good, everything is taken care of up to now. I am unsure if he remembered to tell you, but under the compartment where your armor was stowed are a few weapons I made especially for your mechanical attachments, namely your arm. If you would, follow these directions to remove the entire right sleeve and greave." She followed the instructions, being rewarded with a slight hiss as the limbs retracted up to her thigh and upper arm. "Approach the trunk and place your right hand on the illuminated image." She turned her head to the left, finding a hand shaped light on the right side of

the trunk. She did as she was told, mechanical arms reaching up and grasping her forearm. The arms disassembled the outer casing, placing devices into the metal construction and covering them with alterations of the original plating. The overall change had placed a couple of ridges and bulges in her arm but the weight had stayed the same.

"These devices are weapons," Kim informed. "They are, from the lowest to the elbow, a set of claws for grappling or fighting, a dart launcher with explosive heads attached that is preloaded with fifteen darts and a retractable elbow spike. Now place your foot on the illuminated image." She did as instructed, more arms revealing themselves and doing like alterations to her leg.

"These are a little more devastating," he said, the video continuing as she looked the leg over. "On the tip of your foot are more spikes, or claws, for climbing, grappling or hand to hand combat. The shin has been replaced, making the lower attachment more structurally sound and a retractable blade is integrated into the surface. You can learn how to use it manually from Firecracker when you return. In the thigh, behind the kneecap, is a seventy-millimeter high explosive grenade launcher with a four round magazine. The rounds are all fragmentation and incendiary as well." The suit, as if on cue, covered her limbs again, the surface altering to compensate for the added material. "Good hunting." The video said, disappearing from the visor.

Sapphire stood on the top of the fourth car, watching the mountain ranges before them intently. She had found a few of the suit's integrated systems to be quite useful; variable zoom on distant objects, automatic targeting of weapons and the ammunition monitors to be among her top ten. They were about one mile from the tunnels that lead into the range, the train being able to cover the distance in nearly a single minute giving her only a short while to prepare. When she exited her car the conductor had handed her a bag, inside she found fifteen magazines for her sidearm and an M7 sub-machinegun. She did not know who the conductor was, and as far as she was concerned, her pay grade didn't allow her to. Inside the bag were also several magazines for the automatic weapon and four fragmentation grenades that were being produced for the Equestrian Regulars.

'I think the scarce information I was given was only part of the report,' she thought as they entered the large tunnel. She knew the structure narrowed substantially, lying down as soon as they entered to save herself a head injury. She waited in the dark, seconds feeling like hours as the sounds of the steel wheels on the tracks deafened her too any other sounds. She checked to make sure that her weapons were ready, already the seasoned veteran expecting an ambush. She grasped her M6 in her right hand, the reticule activating on her visor and following the direction it was facing before a dot of sunlight appeared in the distance. The light gave her just enough information to warrant rising to a low crouch. She waited like this, the light quickly filling her vision to reveal several Griffin Army platoons descending on the train. "If I had a bit for every time I smelled a cluster fuck," she mused, opening on the flying gunmen with a volley from her pistol. She saw ten of the twelve rounds strike flesh, blood spurting like a fountain before the wound exploded from the charge in the bullet. The remaining assailants turned towards her, flying abreast to the train as she holstered her

pistol and drew her M7.

The hostiles opened fire on her, forcing her to dive over the edge of the car and break through a window after grabbing onto a rail. Sapphire tumbled into the economy class benches, falling into the aisle and rising to her feet. Several of the griffins had had the same idea, having entered the car and taken aim at her. "Horse apples," he muttered, ducking behind one of the steel benches as the three griffins opened on her with automatic fire. She waited until the fire ceased, raising her arm over the bench and firing on the three blindly. She heard the sound of flesh tearing and blood spraying on the walls before she stood up, loading her pistol from the clips on her belt and holding the empty machinegun at her side. The last remaining griffin ducked out of cover, taking aim before Sapphire lodged a round into its skull. She grimaced inside her helmet as the creature's head exploded, wishing now that she had chosen a less gruesome variant.

The sound of shattering glass drew her attention to the car at the rear, gunfire sounding before she could see what was happening. The sounds ceased, the silence lasting until the door began to slide back. Sapphire raised her pistol, being met with the barrel of another weapon; this one in the hands of the Conductor. They both lowered their weapons, the sound of breaking glass sounding in the car ahead of them drawing their attention. "Go," the conductor said. "I have everything from here back under control. Do not let them reach the engineers." Sapphire nodded, turning and running to the next car.

She didn't bother with the door, simply barreling through the pair in time to catch another griffin off guard and drive it to the ground. The enemy screeched something in their native language before Sapphire drove her steel arm into its throat, silencing the foe for good. Two more Griffins landed on the walkway between cars behind her. Sapphire simply raised her pistol and fired twice, the scope on the weapon activating as it left her free to allow her to aim. The griffins fell off the sides, their bodies being sliced by the wheels as they fell under the car. She ran the length of the car, crashing through another set of doors and entering the next compartment.

Inside were several huddled ponies, groups of three or four crouched together in their benches as they stared at her. She scanned over the car, looking for any hostiles before jogging the length and opening the door that led to the engineer's station. All around the train, flying circles like buzzards, were squadrons of griffins armed with automatic rifles. She raised her pistol, taking aim on a rifleman before spying something odd in the claws of another. It was a long, tubular device with a bulbous extension. She aimed at the enemy, firing quickly but not soon enough. The tube had launched the cone from the end, the projectile striking the train four cars behind. The car exploded, fire and metal extending in all directions as what remained of the chassis separated from the engine. Sapphire unloaded her magazine into the circling horde before climbing along the side of the engine. She hopped from handhold to handhold, digging the claws that protruded from her right hand and foot into the steel construction when she had none. She reached out with her right hand; grasping the door and wrenching the lock open, swinging back away as gunfire echoed from the pilot's stations.

"Friendly fire," she screamed at the door, the bullets halting as she hauled herself into the engine control room. She pulled the thick door shut as the Griffins fired on them, the sounds of metal striking metal resonating through the chamber as the door dented from the sustained fire. "What in Tartarus is going on," Sapphire demanded, standing up looking out of the slits the train had for viewports. One of the engineers began to say something but was stopped as a sound filled the air, the resonant bass vibrating their lungs and bodies to the point of it being painful. The engineers fell to their knees, grabbing at their ears and chests as four loud thuds landed atop the train. The concussive sound died away as the sounds of four pairs of feet walking played on the roof. Sapphire turned toward the engineers, holding a finger up to the respirator on her helmet and sliding across the walls. She traced the path of the sound to the right wall, staring outside the thin slits to catch a glimpse of their new hitchhikers. The sound stopped, followed by a low growling and a few clacks.

****AN:** I would like to inform you all that the symbol "!" when used in the middle of a word denotes the sound one makes when clicking the back of their tongue to the soft palateâ€¦ just sharper and much louder.******

"Thum' Aran no!hun kerlan thrah!" a guttural voice outside the train yelled over the engines. Two other voices of like tone shouted incomprehensively. "Harakanrag Thel' Vadum ekmora Rahla. Grif fon kerinar wort flahmakonh." The strange voice stopped, the sound of shuffling overhead being followed with a loud crash as a large, orange mass landed outside the train engine. Sapphire froze as the figure crouched slightly, bringing the beasts head to the top of the one-way window. The creature, apparently a massive biped, stood at eight feet and three inches. It was wearing armor that almost glowed, actually doing so in certain places. The beast raised its hand, two long fingers between what seemed to be thumbs grasping a slightly curved, black rod. "Poh Nee Kmara Hu!nag hurfalâ€¦" the creatures jaw split into four mandibles when it spoke, the plates lining the outside flexing with them to reveal row after row of shark like teeth. The beast laughed a malevolent, hissing laugh as the rod sizzled and popped, two long, curved stripes of lighting and light materializing on either side of it.

Sapphire swallowed hard, trying to force herself from the sheer terror she was locked in. 'No, not hereâ€¦' she screamed and pleaded in her mind. 'Covenant, hereâ€¦ On Equestriaâ€¦ and if Kim is anypony to believe, these are the worst of them.' She tore her view away from the window, hearing the other three pairs of feet land on the catwalks on the other side. "Hide, now!" She hissed at the engineers. They stopped in shock, as if they had seen a ghost. "What are you waiting for? Hide!" She moved her hand to point to an access vent, finding she had become invisible. "I'm still here, just get hidden!" the two nodded, opening the vent quickly and closing it behind themselves before receding into the darkness of the area between the two power plant engines. Sapphire waved her arm a few times, finding she was only invisible as long as she stayed still lest her movement would cause a ripple effect in the cloak. 'How am I going to make it out of this one,' she questioned her mind, readying herself for an unwinnable fight.

****Oh my Dayum! ****

****Even I didn't see where this was going! It just sort of flowed onto the screen. I actually had to go back and read the thing to see what I had wrote!****

****Anyway, this chapter ends at the same time Kim has his breakdown. And holy balls, Shit's Hitting The Fan In Here!****

****So what do you all think will happen? Will Sapphire survive the four Elites? Will Kim survive the mental breakdown? Am I going to eat my quadruple cheeseburger with every unhealthy topping I could find on it on Livestream?!****

****Maybe :P****

****Tune in later Folks! And before you leave, head on over to the review board " every chapter! I love your opinions, and they help me with the creative process. Forward the Lunar Republic!****

****CREDITS!****

****Black Fire property of and used with permission from Najee****

****Mat and Sapphire are property of and used with permission from Bahamut Crisis Core (Don't worry buddy, Mat will get his spot light soon)****

11. Atonement

****Those of you who know Bahamut Crisis Core, have read any of his stories or read My Little Zombies, know that his Original Character Mat is nothing like I portray him in this story save for the physical features. Even then, the resemblance is only slight. In this story, he never had the incursion with the government or had all the augmentations. This Mat is more of how I see him forming without those key elements in his development, an average Mat. ****

****This Mat is a" for lack of a better title a hippy. He is non-conformist, going into music rather than the military like his ancestors, and tends toward getting drunk when he feels down rather seeking out others. This habit alone makes him different from all other ponies. While not as he was described by his creator, he is still different from everyone around him.****

****Those of you who know or have read MLZ (and have the ability to understand an innuendo), know that he and Sapphire share a relationship on the basis that they are only related through marriage. In this, they are actual brother and sister and that kind of relationship would make old Nazis uncomfortable.****

****My tirade is over; please enjoy this key back-story in the main story. :)****

Mat sat on the stoop of the back stage exit, the Braelin Symphony Hall behind him. He sipped appreciatively from a glass chalice of red wine as he watched the stars above in the darkness that Equestrian law demanded each city provide. He held a smoldering peppermint cigarette in his left hand, raising it to his lips every so often to take from it. He had finished his performance for the night, the

after show events still reeling through his mind.

As he exited the stage and entered the after show chamber, he had confronted Octavia's quartet for bringing the quality of their performance down. He made it quite clear that he noticed several missed notes and moments of dropped tempo, even naming which of them had missed which parts. Octavia was none too happy about his criticism, demanding that he apologize to her friends for what he had said.

His current state was a testament to their argument, his hair disheveled and his tuxedo in disarray. Mat smirked at himself, falling into a light fit of laughter even. "Armaturesâ€¦" he mumbled drunkenly before taking another drink. "They wouldn't know a Jazz Bass from a Contrabass if I broke it over their heads." He sighed, letting his hair fall over his face as he stared into a small puddle by the bottom step. Their argument had brought him to the point of aggression, Mat having broken the podium from the stage and shattering several mirrors in his dressing room. He sighed again, shaking his head and tossing the now empty chalice into a heap of garbage before standing. "No matter," he said to himself, running his fingers through his hair and straightening his tuxedo. "Tonight it is back to Ponyville and intimidating the record label. After a decent meal and a cup of hot coffee." He walked out into the street; following his memory back to an all-night diner he had seen on his way through town.

Mat sat in the diner's outside tables, stirring his coffee with a spoon as he looked over the last trains to leave the station before it closed for the night. The soonest one was in ten minutes, but he knew he would not make it. He was currently downtown, ten very indirect miles from the station near the city's walls and not quite finished with his meal. The next train to leave was in about an hour, which meant he had time to reach it, but it made four other stops to avoid the Griffin DMZ by going through Dodge Junction, Appleloosa, Trottingham and Canterlot before finally arriving at his destination. He took a drink of his coffee, checking the prices on a first class ticket with four stops. The price had been dramatically reduced, having nearly quartered from the original two hundred bits.

'Not that I would have to worry about it,' he thought, laying the newspaper aside and taking another bite of a local delicacy. 'I'm rich, famous and adored by every mare worth shagging.' He let his gaze drift back to the paper, finding an article in view.

Today marks the thirty-seventh anniversary of the Equestrian victory over the invasion of the Griffins. The veterans association raises the nation's flag to half-staff, as they do every year, to remember the fallen soldiers that fought to keep the better-armed and organized griffins at bay until the final fight on griffin soil. In the photo below are fifteen soldiers of the war, each kneeling before a photo of Equestrian Regular Army Colonel Edge Shields. The named Colonel gave his legs and right arm to the cause of defendingâ€¦|

Mat folded the paper in half, throwing the bundle into the small fireplace the diner kept alit for aesthetics; the photo of his father in his hay day burning up quickly with the remainder of the print. He held no love for his father, the crotchety old stallion having berated him for joining peace circles and band in high school instead

of the early military programs and the markspany's club. He even chased him around the house for hours one day in his wheelchair, cracking a bullwhip as incentive and even landing hits a few times. He remembered his uncle telling him he wasn't that way until after the war; that what he had gone through and the things he had to do had changed him. Nevertheless, Mat didn't care. To him the mean codger was always that, a washed up and crippled soldier with a hard on for his sister.

Mat finished the remainder of his food, draining his mug before placing a tip on the table and walking out to the street to call a taxi.

"Master Shields, wake up." A gruff and rather callous voice said, bringing Mat from his slumber on the train. He had fallen asleep at Dodge junction, the four-hour ride there have literally bored him to sleep. Mat sat up on the bench he was laying on, rubbing his face with a hand before straightening his hair.

"What do you want," he said in an equally callous tone as the pony that had woke him. "I have no time for autographs or photos, so if you're wanting one I suggest you go to the label company andâ€¦" his voice fell short as he laid eyes on four armed royal guardsponies, each clad in golden armor and holding loaded firearms. He blinked four times, his mind trying to find a reason for them being there. "What is the meaning of this?" he asked, looking out of the window to find the train stopped in Canterlot Royal Rail Station.

"Come with us sir," the pony that had spoken before said. "If you do not come peacefully we are ordered to subdue you by force and bring you before the Royal Judicial Court." One of the guards held up a pair of steel manacles, jangling them slightly with a smile on his face. "Complying will greatly reduce any inconvenience you are facing now." Mat sighed, standing quietly and straightening his clothes.

"Fine," he said. "I will go quietly. You have been quite patient already. I will put in a good word for you all during the hearing of this farce for your loyalty to your superiors." The four lead his off the train, two taking the lead while the rest brought up the rear to make sure he didn't try to make a break for freedom.

"Six counts of destruction of property, four counts of disturbing the peace, five counts of minor assault, three counts of aggravated assaultâ€¦" The judge laid down the list before him, having only reached page three of ten. The robed stallion removed his spectacles, rubbing the bridge of his nose and sighing heavily. "The list goes on Master Shields. It seems that each place you have performed at in the past year are calling out at once against you. Moreover, Symphony Orchestrated is tired of simply subtracting the cost of the repairs and compensations from your pay check. Have you anything to say for yourself?" The seven judges looked out into the room, each laying eyes and disappointed looks upon Mat as he stood before them with his hands clasped behind his back.

The opal colored pony shuffled side to side, shifting his weight onto his right leg. "No your honors, I have nothing to say for myself." He looked from the left judge to the right, returning his attention to the center judge finally. "I trust you will advise a fair punishment."

The center judge looked to his right and left, the ponies on either side nodding once in an exaggerated motion. The high judge returned his gaze to Mat, his mind made up. "Very well then," he said. "It is the opinion of the court and the sevenfold process to offer you a choice of your punishment. Your options are four years of community service" the judge to his right spoke up, the mare finishing the high judge's sentence.

"Or go to jail for one year time," she said, emphasis placed on each word. Mat looked at the ground in the middle space, his decision already chosen but still giving the impression of thought. "Speak, Master Shields. We have not the time for your pretense and mind games. One year of imprisonment or four of community service." Mat smirked, raising his head.

"I choose the service," he said. "I doubt I would do well behind bars. And four years of benefit concerts and picking up litter seems favorable to anypony with a brain." He smiled to himself, having chosen the easy way out in his mind. His smile faded as each of the judges smiled slightly, the high judge even laughing lightly at his choice. "What is the joke here?" Mat asked, half-smiling at the humor he missed. The judge looked him in the eyes, a smile on his face.

"Is that your final decision," he asked. "You shall not get another." Mat nodded once. "Very well then Master Shields" Or should I say Cadet Shields?" Mat rose an eyebrow, unsure what the judge meant. "Let me be more specific. You are now enlisted in the Equestrian Home-world Defense Force, otherwise known as the Black Guard." The judge stamped a paper on his desk, striking his gavel on the edge of the desk. Mat's jaw hung loose as the judges stood to leave, his mind reeling for a way to dispute the sentence. "Arguing is useless, Master Shields; you are to be transported to Ponyville by guard truck, where you shall be transferred from the care of the Royal Guards and into the very capable hands of the Black Guard. We wish you luck Recruit Shields, you are going to need all of it you can get." The high judge stood from his chair, turning away from the room and walking to his quarters.

"You cannot do this!" Mat screamed at the judge, taking a hasty step forward. "This is a farce, a complete and total abuse of power under a preconceived opinion!" The judge ignored him, closing the door behind himself and vanishing into his private rooms. Mat ran at the door, intent on breaking it down and throttling the pony before he saw the butt of a rifle on a collision course with his forehead. Then his vision went black.

****HA! Serves that pompous ass right! Just kidding Bahamut, I feel for his plight****

****Anyway, this is the short bit of what Mat had done that wasn't his daily grind. Things like playing music and sitting back and raking in profit.****

****Now I would like you all to go over to the review box at the bottom of this page, click on the light blue area inside the text box and type up your review. It really does, contrary to popular belief, help me in writing these little chapters. Even the major ones. I need all the input I can get to write up the storyboarded**

events.**

Creditsâ€|

**Mat is Property of and used with permission from Bahamut Crisis
Core.**

End
file.